

Gap City:  
Toward a Minority Architecture in  
Xian Cun

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Architecture

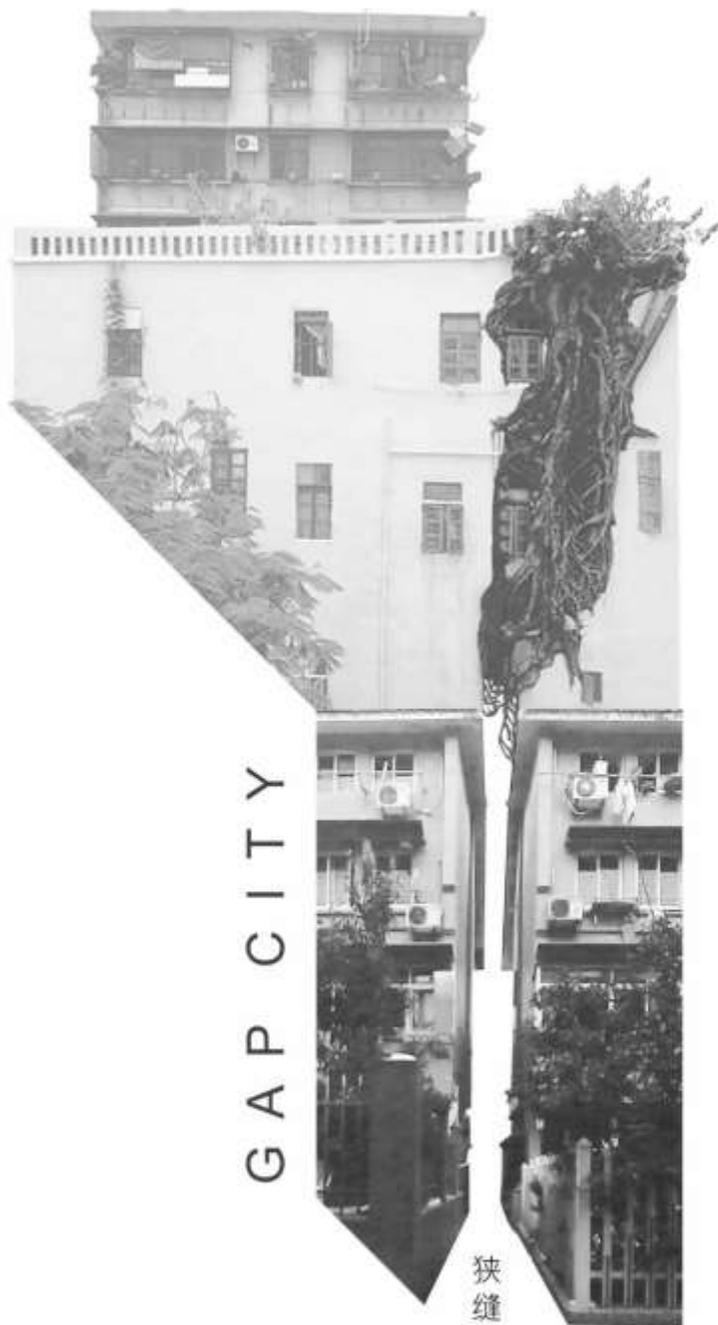
in

Architecture

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Ottawa, Ontario

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GAP CITY

狭缝  
城市



*Figure 1.1. The typical bags, migrant workers carry when traveling.  
These plastic woven bags were originally used to transport commercial goods.  
Also called snakeskin bags because of the patterning.*

## **ABSTRACT**

For many cities, their identity is rooted within its shadows. A rushed reform can wipe out the essential culture of a place. Within recent years, the Chinese economy has experienced major growth. The demand for cheap labour has created a new demographic, Migrant workers. Many from rural farmlands seek jobs in major cities. Amongst all the rapid demolition and construction, affordable housing in urban villages is disappearing due to redevelopment.

By analyzing the conditions in an urban village experiencing redevelopment in Guangzhou, XianCun. This thesis set out to explore strategies where architecture can resist, adapt, and remember. Through speculative designs of temporary interventions, and infill structures, the resulting project will use transformative methods to preserve a disappearing culture. A space that promotes integration will be created for migrant workers to inhabit and, another layer to GuangZhou for the locals to discover. A vibrant thread sewing together the gaps in the city.

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

### - China - 中国 -

China has experienced massive development and changes in recent years. There is rapid growth in the economy and various technological advances, but along with all the positive progressive growth comes a cost. Unfortunately, China is lacking an equally strong cultural foundation for the country to fully flourish. The Communist Party is the main political party in power since the Proclamation of the People's Republic of China by Mao Zedong on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1949.<sup>1</sup> The ideology of Communism is the sharing of all possessions and suppressing personal expressions and beliefs. *Maoism, a manifesto by president ZheDong Mao was derived from Marxism and, started the Cultural Revolution beginning in 1966. The movement started with the destruction of "The Four Olds": Old ideas, old culture, old customs, old habits.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard K. Heilig "Timeline: Chronology of Key Event," China Profile, Last Modified on October 12, 2013, [http://www.china-profile.com/history/hist\\_list\\_1.htm](http://www.china-profile.com/history/hist_list_1.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

This historical event punished all the artists, intellectuals and religious figures, taking Communism to an extreme. It left a mark on the country and its people. In a way Chinese culture took a pause and continues to have difficulties bouncing back ever since. Through the Chinese Reforms in 1978, was when the government loosened its grip and made property permits available for purchase. The economy started to shift into Capitalism.<sup>3</sup>

This opened the country to foreign investment and gave permission for entrepreneurs to start private businesses. Southeastern part of China and its major cities started to rapidly expand, whereas the surrounding rural farmlands remained stagnant in economic growth (Figure 1.2). The abundance of businesses and factories means a large demand for cheap labour. Many people migrated from rural areas, with limited job opportunities and flooded into metropolises to earn a living. This creates the phenomenon of migrant workers. Cheap labour is also exported and people are shipped abroad.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

This exponential growth also meant urban developments, and large-scale constructions happened quickly. Highrise apartment buildings appeared in the skyline built within a matter of 19 days<sup>4</sup>, and railway stations were completed in as little as 9 hours.<sup>5</sup> The wave of the new crushed and cleared significant portions of the old cities. Many characteristics of the major Chinese cities that were deemed unpleasant were wiped out by the Chinese Utopian dream of a Westernized city. An area can be transformed completely, and become unfamiliar, within a year.

Mainly the southern parts of the country were exposed to the western influence early in the late 1800s with major trade at the ports of Shanghai. The economy boom in the late 1900s and then since 2010 has catapulted the major cities into a completely different context. In this growth, there was not enough time to adjust to the massive increase in resources. The “Westernization” of China sped up since the 2008 Olympics, to display a polished image of the capital Beijing to foreign visitors. The garbage, the old buildings, the beggars, and street vendors were all swept away. The streets were cleaned carelessly.

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<sup>4</sup> “Chinese construction firm erects 57-storey skyscraper in 19 days”, The Guardian Last Modified April 30,2015,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/30/chinese-construction-firm-erects-57-storey-skyscraper-in-19-days>.

<sup>5</sup> “China speed: World amazed by railway project completed within 9 hours,” People’s Daily Online, Last Modified January 25,2018, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2018/0125/c90000-9419908.html>.

The cost of living in the first-tier cities is increasing at a staggering rate. The price of housing has been driven higher by those that purchase properties for investment. The average working class is unable to afford an apartment unit without funds from parents. It is also the cultural norm, for the adult male to own property to prepare for marriage. “The housing sector is now one of China’s main pillars of growth.”<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, this is also a hotbed for corruption. It is an unspoken rule for the developers to bribe officials to gain support for future projects. Meanwhile with the cities’ high density, space is becoming scarce. Therefore, developers resort to gentrification of older residential areas and urban villages. The residents are forcefully bought out often with violent methods. Luckily, there is change for the better with new policies introduced by President Xi Jinping. A price cap has been put in place for the housing market, strict guideline to inhibit corruption, and laws in place that prevent the ruthless actions by developers.

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<sup>6</sup> YangPeng Zheng, “Can China fix its runaway housing market?”, South China MorningPost, Last Modified October 13, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/business/article/2167575/can-china-fix-its-runaway-housing-market>.

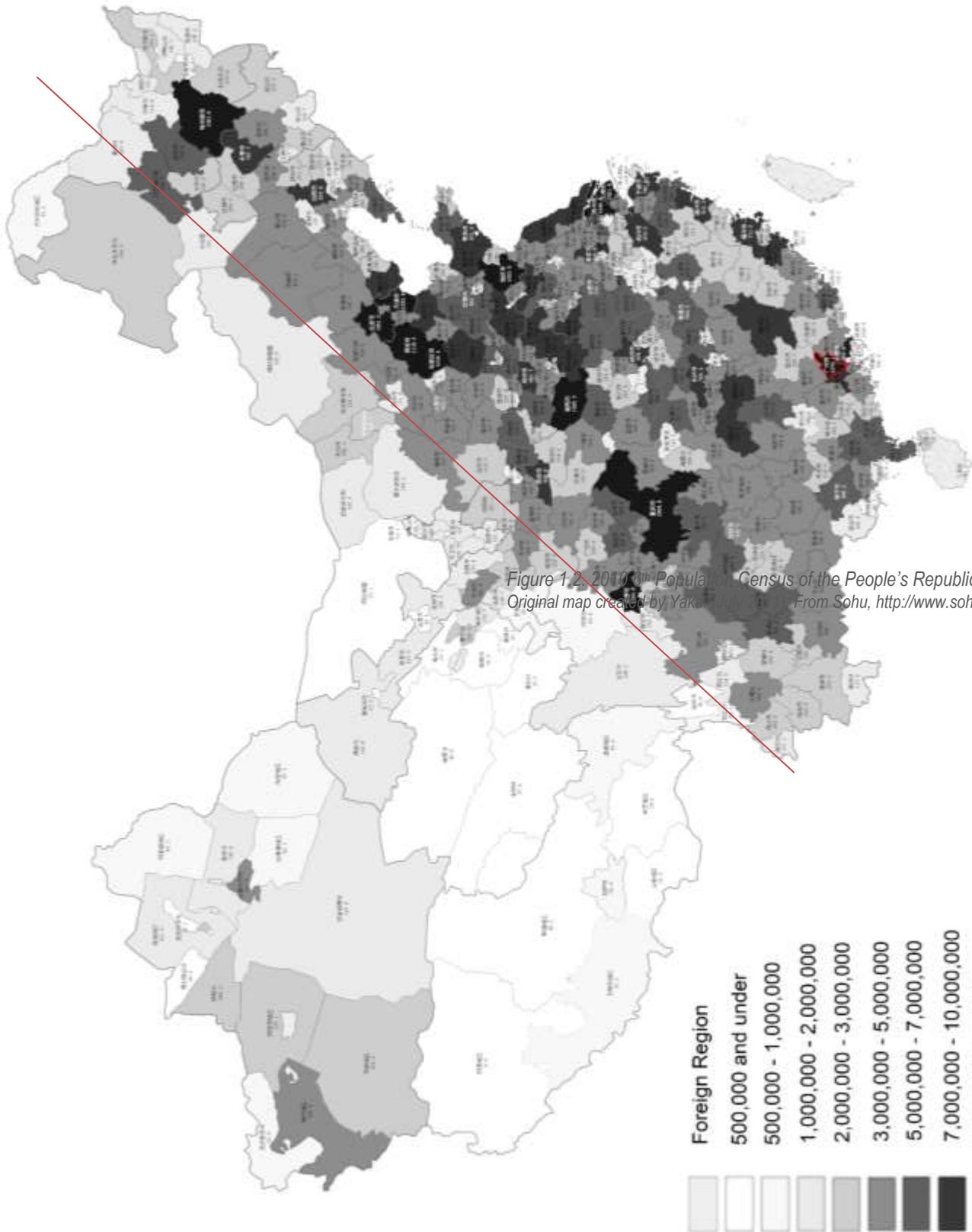


Figure 1.2. 2010 3<sup>rd</sup> Population Census of the People's Republic of China Map.  
 Original map created by Yaku... From Sohu, [http://www.sohu.com/a/114958048\\_465888](http://www.sohu.com/a/114958048_465888).

## - Migrant Worker - 农民工 -

Migrant workers are becoming a prominent demographic, due to the high demand for cheap labour in cities. In two decades, people from lower-tier cities and rural farmland flood into cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou amongst others, in search of jobs. In these cities, the “number of migrants grew by 400,000 to 500,000 a year in the past decade.”<sup>7</sup> (Figure 1.4). Regardless of the increasing population, their original identity as second-class citizens remain. “While migrant workers are labelled as ‘important’, actually they’re still in a weak position in society. Most of today’s migrant workers are still helpless urban vagrants and their humble identity does not seem to have been completely changed.”<sup>8</sup>

“It must be acknowledged that urban society does not listen to the voices of migrant workers – rather, it ignores or even doubts them.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Mandy Zuo, “China scraps urban-rural distinction in ‘hukou’ household registration system”, South China Morning Post, Last Modified July 31, 2014,

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1563062/china-scraps-urban-rural-distinction-hukou-household-registration-system>.

<sup>8</sup> South China Morning Post, “China’s migrant workers are still marginalized and yet to find their voice in society”, Last Modified April 08, 2018,

<https://www.scmp.com/comment/letters/article/2140627/chinas-migrant-workers-are-still-marginalised-and-yet-find-their-voice>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

The migrant worker phenomenon is reflected in the increasing number of people living outside of their *Hukou* (Figure 1.3). *Hukou* is an identification of residency in China, defining the region to which one belongs. Gaining *Hukou* in major cities allows access to more job opportunities and better education for children. In the past, it also classified people into urban or agricultural groups. This distinction has been removed, but it is still region specific. This "only makes a difference on paper. The real difference will be made when the gap in terms of social benefits is filled...There's still a long way to go before there is an equalized social security net among different regions. The fundamental solution is to unify social security [nationwide]." <sup>10</sup>

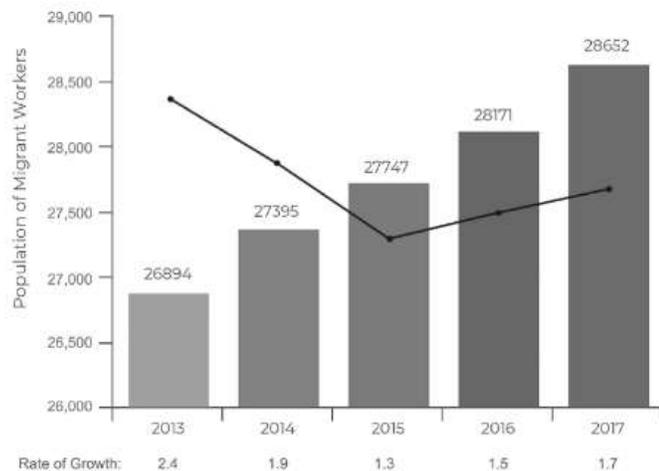


Figure 1.4. 2017 Growth of Migrant Workers in China  
Original image created by China's National Bureau of Statics.  
[http://wap.stats.gov.cn/fb/201804/t20180427\\_1596409.html](http://wap.stats.gov.cn/fb/201804/t20180427_1596409.html).

<sup>10</sup> Mandy Zuo, "China scraps urban-rural distinction in 'hukou' household registration system", South China Morning Post, Last Modified July 31, 2014, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1563062/china-scraps-urban-rural-distinction-hukou-household-registration-system>.

Before 2000, migrant workers would leave their families, seek work elsewhere, and the majority would ultimately return to their rural homes. From 2010 onwards, many of the younger generation rural residents have the intention to leave the rural farmlands altogether. They look to settle down in the metropolis and change their *Hukou* for a better future. One option available to them is the College Entrance Exam; another route is to be a migrant worker. Most new migrant workers are faced with many difficulties because they don't have adequate knowledge of farming techniques to make a living back in the rural farms while also suffering from the struggles to survive in the city.<sup>11</sup>



Figure 1.3. Population Migration in Beijing.  
 Original image created by South China Morning Post.  
 Statistic Source from China's National Bureau of Statics.  
<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1563062/china-scraps-urban-rural-distinction-hukou-household-registration-system>.

<sup>11</sup> Radio Free Asia, "The second generation of migrant workers are in a dilemma: they can't return to the countryside and can't integrate into the city," Last Modified August 09 2008, <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/yataibaodao/2-08092008091248.html>.

The most disheartening struggle of migrant workers is being refused pay. There are many cases, where projects unexpectedly terminate the workers who are let go without any compensation. According to the Hong Kong based NGO China Labour Bulletin, on April 18 2016, hundreds of workers went on strike at SAE Magnetics in Dongguan, Guangdong Province, after the company announced the closure of one of its departments, threatening the livelihoods of hundreds of workers. Before taking to the streets, the workers had demanded that they receive their legally-entitled compensation but had received no response from management.<sup>12</sup>



There's a phenomenon called "ChunYun" during holidays such as Chinese New Year. Large groups of people flood to train stations or bus stops, in order to return home to reunite with their families (Figure 1.4). There were an estimated to be 2.99 billion passengers in 2019.<sup>13</sup> This creates the problem of a shortage of tickets resulting in raised ticket prices. Therefore, many migrant workers are unable to return home year after year during the New Year celebrations. Those that are stuck in the city gather together to celebrate (Figure 3.10).

Figure 1.4. The crowd at train station during Chinese New Year.  
"The Journey Home"  
Photograph by YingYi Yang  
Displayed during 4th "Migrant Workers – My Brothers and Sisters" Photography Competition on May 12, 2012.  
[http://1.nmg-photo.com/2012/jxcyl\\_0512/60.html](http://1.nmg-photo.com/2012/jxcyl_0512/60.html)

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<sup>12</sup> Cal Wong, "As China's Economy Slows, Workers' Anger Soars," The Diplomat, Last Modified May 11, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/05/as-chinas-economy-slows-workers-anger-soars/>

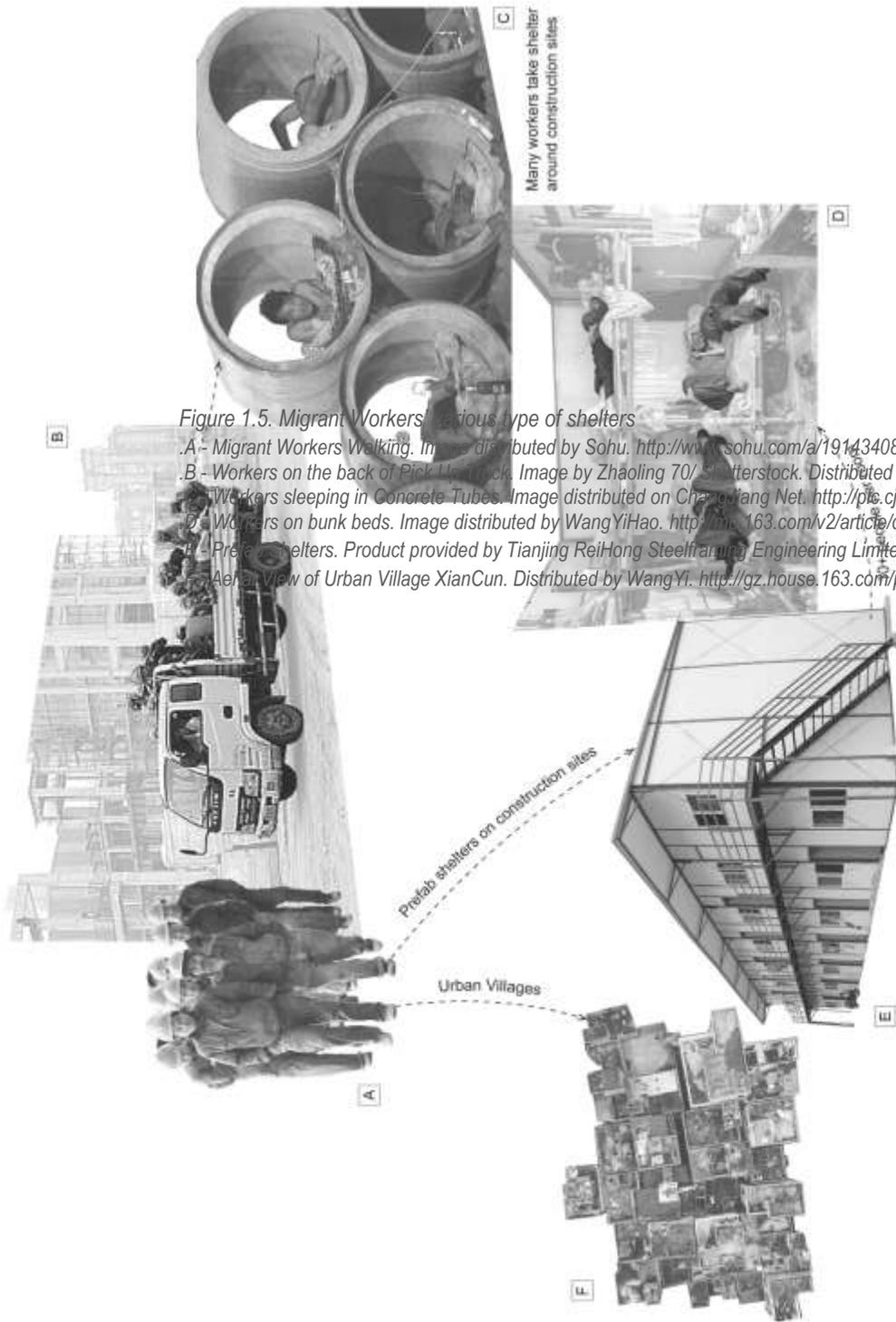
<sup>13</sup> CCTV, "The Spring Festival in 2019 is expected to send 2.99 billion passengers. 200 million tickets have been sold." Last Modified January 08, 2019, <http://m.news.cctv.com/2019/01/08/ARTIeT3YZdCfoJX1KBN7qRAB190108.shtml>

Starting out, many migrant workers cannot afford decent shelter. The worst conditions consist of workers living on the construction site where they work, in make-shift tents or within the building materials (Figure 1.5.C). The few areas providing cheap rentals are called *Urban Villages* (Figure 1.5.F). They are areas avoided or deemed unpleasant by the average locals. Unfortunately, over the years the value of housing skyrocketed. The price of rentals in urban villages increased significantly and became unaffordable to most migrant workers. The majority of these urban village rentals located close to the city core are due for demolition in the next few years as many villagers that are shareholders await redevelopment for profit.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bailey Hu, “*Urban Villages Under Attack Razing Migrants’ Last Refuge*”, *That’s Magazine*, May 2017.

The government has very few policies set up to aid the problems the migrant workers face. In recent years, well-established development companies have provided temporary shelters in portable prefab structures on site, constructed with mostly reusable materials such as light frame steel and composite sandwich panels. They can be easily assembled, disassembled and moved to another site. (Figure 1.5.E). A room can be as small as 26 square meters, occupied by as many as 12 people on bunk beds. Each person only has two square meters. These spaces are also poorly insulated, thermally and acoustically. (Figure 1.5.D). In peripheral regions, migrant workers have formed villages with these types of structures. But, once the project is completed and the shelter is disassembled, the workers are once again rendered homeless.



Many workers take shelter around construction sites

Figure 1.5. Migrant Workers' various type of shelters

.A- Migrant Workers Walking. Image distributed by Sohu. [http://www.sohu.com/a/191434080\\_367734](http://www.sohu.com/a/191434080_367734)

.B- Workers on the back of Pick Up truck. Image by Zhaoling 70/ Shutterstock. Distributed by The Dilomat <https://thediomat.com/2016/05/as>

.C- Workers sleeping in Concrete Tubes. Image distributed on Changjiang Net. [http://pic.cjn.cn/tplh/201307/t2297040\\_16.htm](http://pic.cjn.cn/tplh/201307/t2297040_16.htm)

.D- Workers on bunk beds. Image distributed by WangYiHao. <http://img.163.com/v2/article/detail/D2DGF06J0526F3CJ.html>.

.E- Prefab shelters. Product provided by Tianjing ReilHong Steelframing Engineering Limited <http://www.caigangganggou.com/m/a/huodongfa>

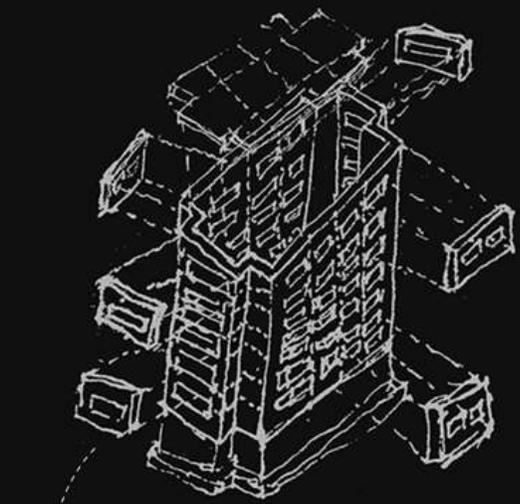
.F- Aerial View of Urban Village XianCun. Distributed by WangYi. <http://gz.house.163.com/photonev/5N620087/73437.html#p=CUNF4U6O5N>

# 2 INITIAL SPECULATION

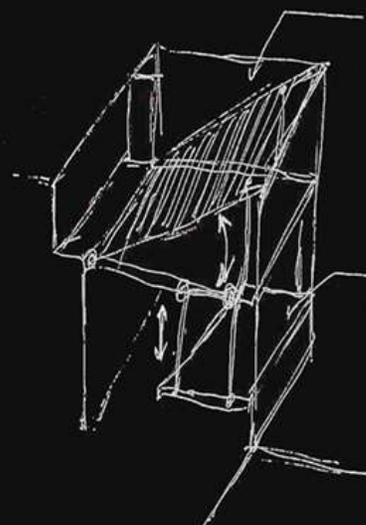
After investigating the current conditions in China, possible solutions are explored in the following initial speculations - an attempt at resolving issues regarding migrant workers, rapid demolition of relatively new constructions and the empty pockets between buildings in older residential neighborhoods. The first issue of high demand for housing in these major cities is driving their prices substantially higher, limiting the number of affordable rentals for people with lower income, mainly migrant workers and new university graduates. They are only able to rent in locations far from the city center or in relatively substandard and dangerous areas in conditions found in urban villages.

Secondly, the high rate of demolition of buildings that are only a few years old, or cases where the construction was never completed due to lack of investment. This thesis explores the possibility to make use of all the materials, instead of creating more waste. To “quarry” the materials and disassemble the building piece by piece, instead of pure demolition is one option. Thirdly, the empty underutilized spaces between buildings in older residential areas: all the newly developed areas are walled off from the public, whereas the older residential units have a gap between buildings that cannot be used as public space and therefore only collects garbage. Potentially, demolished materials can be broken down into pieces and reconstructed in the gap spaces between older residential areas this could accommodate some of the demand for housing people with lower income. (Figure 2.1).

Pieces of concrete are cut from the buildings due for demolition



Floors and roofs are adjustable, and can be manipulated to change the spaces



Become invisible to the pedestrians passing by once the floors are pulled up

notches and cuts can be used for assembly



Using clips or Fasteners to "sew" or tie together the concrete pieces

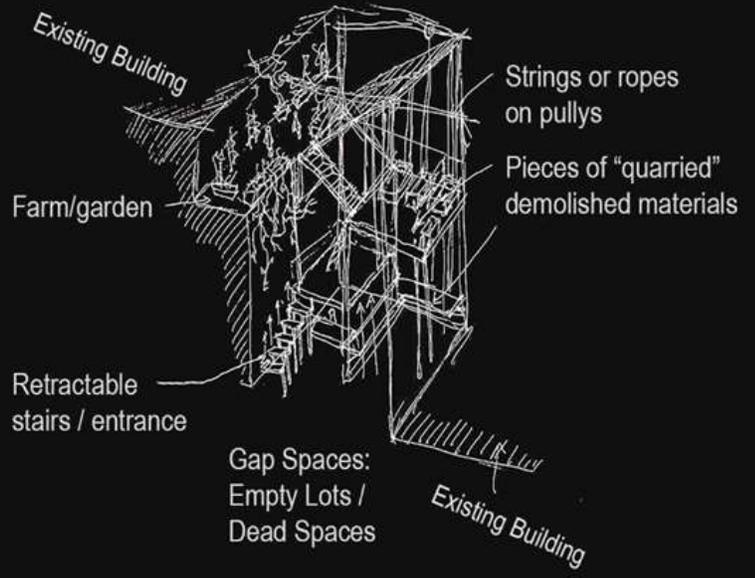


Figure 2.1. Inhabiting "gap spaces"

# 3

## CONTEXT

### - Guangzhou - 广州 -

Guangzhou is also known as Canton, the provincial capital of Guangdong. It is also called YangCheng, meaning the Goat City, originating from an ancient legend where five goats gifted by an immortal being saved the city from a long drought. It is currently one of the most influential amongst the first-tier Chinese cities. In history, it was a major terminal in the Maritime Silk Road, and it continues to be one of the major transportation hubs for foreign trade. The Zhujiang or Pearl River which flows into the city and was the major trading route - cargo ships still sailing the river. Since the emergence of economic reform, the entrepreneurial spirit has been more vibrant in the Southern parts of China, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenzhen being the hubs of private enterprises.

The Pearl River is also a key factor that determines the value of a property. Districts close to the shore with a river view are deemed more desirable. Properties close to the northern shore of the northern stream are more valuable than the areas close to the southern stream. This has caused a cluster of high-rise buildings to line the peripheral of the river, blocking the river views for the inland developments - in some cases, causing air circulation problems and hence contributing to greenhouse effect.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Guangzhou Government Official Website, Accessed on November 23, 2018, <http://www.gz.gov.cn/>.

The Western region of GuangZhou the oldest part of the city – was originally called XiGuan, now LiWan district.<sup>16</sup> The city is rapidly expanding eastward. For the longest time, since the Qin Dynasty (221-207BC) until the early 2000s YueXiu district has been GuangZhou’s city center.<sup>17</sup> More recently, TienHe district has developed into the new city center, with the GuangZhou TianHe CBD (Central Business District) at the heart of it. The landmark structure the GuangZhou Tower and HuaChengHui (The Mall of the World), marking the central axis of the city.<sup>18</sup> (Figure 3.1). Currently, the city is expanding even further east into HuangPu District and further South into HaiZhu and PanYu District below the Pearl River. There are many urban villages in these regions, but they have either been demolished or are due for demolition.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> LiWan District Official Website, Accessed December 26, 2018, <http://www.lw.gov.cn/>

<sup>17</sup> YueXiu District Official Website, Accessed December 26, 2018, <http://www.yuexiu.gov.cn/>

<sup>18</sup> TianHe District Official Website, Accessed December 26, 2018, <http://www.thnet.gov.cn/>

<sup>19</sup> WangYi, “Guangzhou 9 billion development This year’s key projects are here!”, Last Modified November 20, 2018, <http://bendi.news.163.com/guangdong/18/1120/18/E12U761004178D6J.html>



Figure 3.1. Map of Guangzhou

- QiLou - 旗楼 -

There are tenement buildings, built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in Hong Kong, Macau, southern China and Taiwan - designed for both residential and commercial uses - traditionally, the first level consists of commercial spaces that are set back to create an exterior canopied arcade for the pedestrian to shop while being sheltered from the rain – a benefit since many of these cities have heavy rainy seasons and the typhoon threat. The level above is for the owner and additional levels are rented out. The third or fourth level usually has a walkout balcony. The wall enclosing the balcony is called the “daughter wall”, with cutouts that function to lessen the dangers and damages from typhoon (Figure 3.3). These designs originated in the LingNan region in Guangdong due to constant rain.<sup>20</sup> The building type has then become prevalent in Guangzhou. The ZhongShan 4/5 Lu in the past was described as a dragon going through Guangzhou.<sup>21</sup> The design evolved 100 years - the structure and spaces are based on the golden ratio.<sup>22</sup> Nowadays in Guangzhou, many buildings are protected as heritage buildings, and the streets have become solely pedestrian shopping streets. (Figure 3.2).

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<sup>20</sup> YongJie Li, “QiLou: The City Mark of Lingnan Culture,” Chinese Social Science Net, Last Modified December 24, 2014, [http://www.cssn.cn/zt/rwln/zthd/lb/201501/t20150119\\_1483995.shtml](http://www.cssn.cn/zt/rwln/zthd/lb/201501/t20150119_1483995.shtml).

<sup>21</sup> GuangDong YangCheng Evening News, “Old City Reconstruction and Cultural Heritage The Demise of QiLou Street and 2/3 Lu,” Last Modified November 21, 2007, [https://web.archive.org/web/20160305225820/http://www.ycwb.com/xkb/2007-11/21/content\\_1692247.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20160305225820/http://www.ycwb.com/xkb/2007-11/21/content_1692247.htm).

<sup>22</sup> YongJie Li, “QiLou: The City Mark of Lingnan Culture,” Chinese Social Science Net, Last Modified December 24, 2014, [http://www.cssn.cn/zt/rwln/zthd/lb/201501/t20150119\\_1483995.shtml](http://www.cssn.cn/zt/rwln/zthd/lb/201501/t20150119_1483995.shtml).



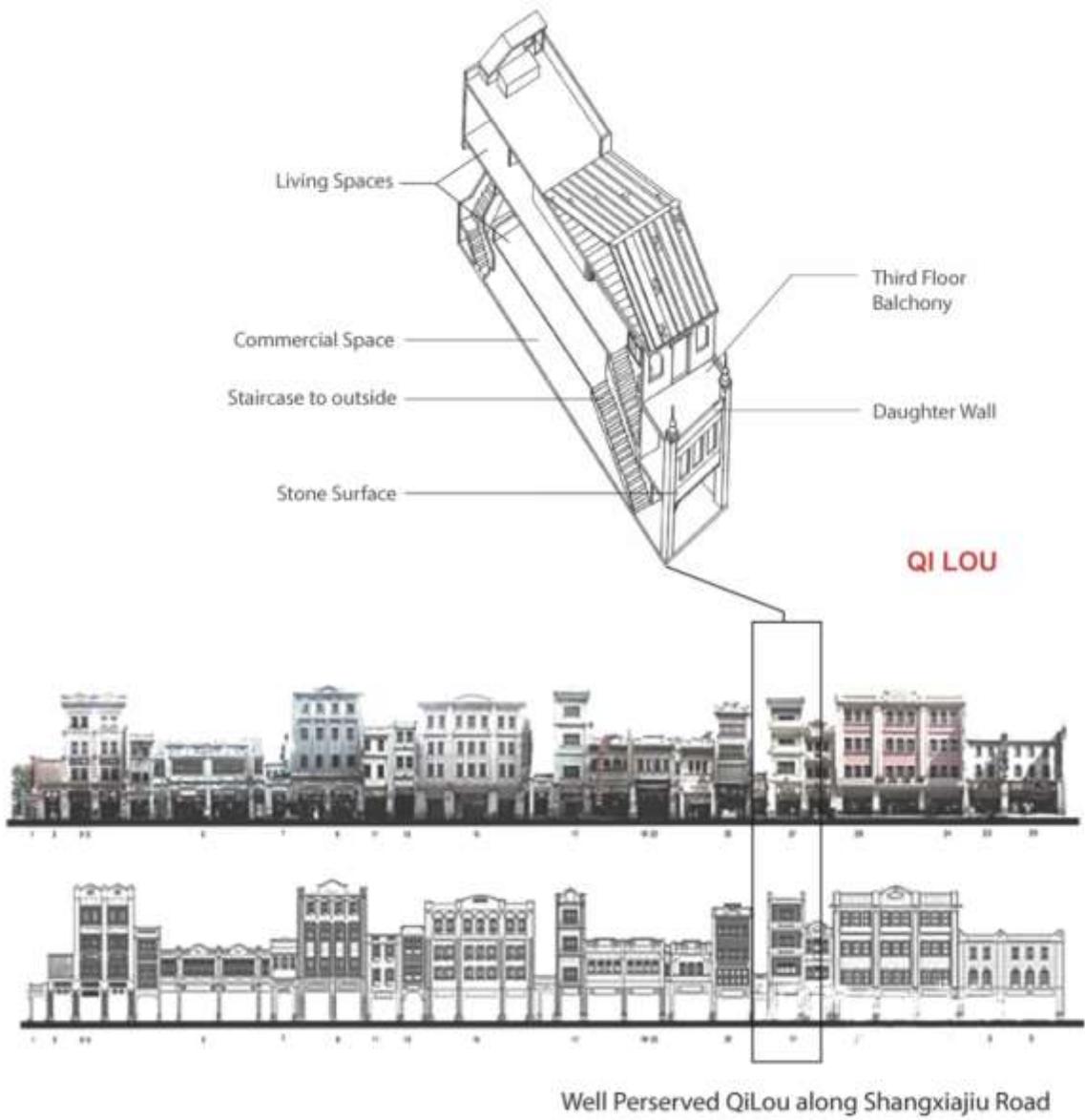


Figure 3.3. Qi Lou  
 Original image distributed by XiaoMeng, Li, on SinaNews.  
<http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2009-12-23/014716816573s.shtml>

QiLou used to be inhabited by people who were merchants with a decent amount of wealth. The older style of residential buildings, occupied by the average working class in the past, is called TongZi Lou. In Guangzhou, many such TongZi Lou are located behind QiLou. One to two-story residential buildings for large three generation families. The footprint is narrow, so the spaces are laid out in a line connected by a single corridor.<sup>23</sup>



**TONGZI LOU:**

The historic residential houses behind Qi Lou

Figure 3.4. Tongzi Lou

Original image distributed by Guangzhou impression on KKNews  
<https://kknews.cc/zh-my/home/y8alvek.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Guangzhou Impression, "Old houses in Yangcheng (2) - old residential types in Guangzhou a hundred years ago - TongZi Lou," KKNews, Last Modified on February 16 2017, <https://kknews.cc/zh-my/home/y8alvek.html>.

The best preserved QiLou are in the western areas of Guangzhou, mostly along ShangXiaJiu, a pedestrian street in LiWan district. (Figure 3.1 & Figure 3.2). Filled with old restaurants that have been in business for over 10 years or more (Figure 3.5 & Figure 3.6). The commercial spaces are very narrow, with vendors with carts tucked away in narrow alleys. There are also creative merchants that use the staircases to display their merchandise. Unfortunately, many QiLou has been demolished or modified (Figure 3.2). One of the most historically valuable QiLou streets LiuErSan Lu was quickly demolished within a week. Government officials deemed them to be too old and worthless, hence they set out to wipe out these important historic streets to make way for the new subway system.<sup>24</sup>

The most common method of Qilou modification is constructing a new façade over the existing building. An example being Beijing Lu. (Figure 3.7). where certain QiLou buildings have a LED or illuminated billboard advertisements built over the original building. Larger commercial spaces are created combining the first floor of multiple buildings. Near the northern end of Beijing Lu lies a large patch of the historic street paving preserved under glass panels (Figure 3.8). However, each development defaces the historic buildings and the QiLou street is rendered unrecognizable.

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<sup>24</sup> GuangDong YangCheng Evening News, "Old City Reconstruction and Cultural Heritage The Demise of QiLou Street and 2/3 Lu," Last Modified November 21, 2007, [https://web.archive.org/web/20160305225820/http://www.ycwb.com/xkb/2007-11/21/content\\_1692247.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20160305225820/http://www.ycwb.com/xkb/2007-11/21/content_1692247.htm).

QiLou - Well Preserved  
Heritage Mixed- use Buildings  
along Shangxiajiu Road



Figure 3.5. ShangXiaJiu Road  
Original Photograph distributed by GZShopper  
<https://gzshopper.com/2047-shangxiajiu-pedestrian-street-shopping-culture.html>

Old Man and Pop Shops  
Selling Local East on First  
Level of QiLou



Figure 3.6. YinJi Vermicelli Roll Shop  
Original Photograph distributed by GZShopper  
<https://gzshopper.com/2047-shangxiajiu-pedestrian-street-shopping-culture.html>

QiLou - New Facade installed  
over Heritage building along  
Beijing Road



Figure 3.7. Beijing Lu  
Original Photograph distributed by Expedia.  
<https://www.expedia.mx/fotos/delta-del-rio-de-la-perla/canton/calle-peatonal-beijing-road.d6209409/>

Glazing over historic streets



Figure 3.8. Beijing Lu  
Original Photograph distributed by Wikipedia.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beijing\\_Road\\_in\\_Guangzhou.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Beijing_Road_in_Guangzhou.jpg)

## - Urban Villages - 城里村 -

There are two types of property occupancy in China: Government-owned land, and Farmer's collective ownership. Most urban land is owned by the Chinese government. The rural land is owned collectively by farmers. This type of land is divided amongst the members who each holding a share. As the city such as GuangZhou started to expand, the government purchased the surrounding rural land from farmers. The residual land then began to form Urban Villages, plots of rural land surrounded by the city inhabited by low-income migrant workers and new university graduates.<sup>25</sup>

Legally the villagers are only allowed to build to five stories, but many villagers built more levels to earn more rent. When the government buys them out, villagers are paid based on the owned floor area for people that are within the five stories limit. In the media, it is claimed that there are many cases where villagers have become millionaires or billionaires after the government compensates them with money or with units in new apartment buildings. But after much research, I have learned that there are many villagers forced however to agree to unfair contracts. Additionally, the villagers who are not shareholders, purely renting as tenants are not considered for any compensation. Even though they are faced with the most difficult situation.

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<sup>25</sup> The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, National People's Congress Regulation, (Beijing: Land Administration Law of the People's Republic: 2005), [http://www.gov.cn/banshi/2005-05/26/content\\_989.htm](http://www.gov.cn/banshi/2005-05/26/content_989.htm).

It is well known that corrupt government officials receive massive amounts of profit.<sup>26</sup> The XianCun situation is a clear example of this. The people who refuse to leave are fighting for a fair compensation, to afford another place to live in a city with limited cheap places to rent. With the urban villages disappearing, there are very few affordable places for migrant workers.<sup>27</sup> Looking at the past events of XianCun since 2010 there have been numerous protests resisting the demolition and redevelopment plans put forth (Figure 3.16). Many Urban Villages have been added to the list of redevelopments projects and face the same fate <sup>28</sup> (Figure 3.9).

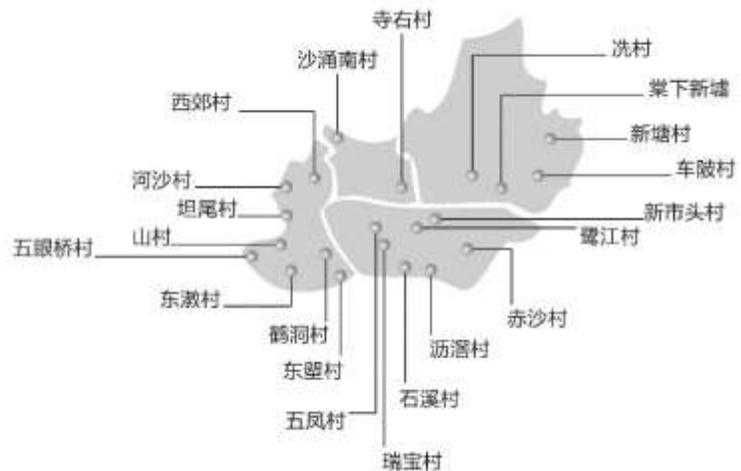


Figure 3.9. Urban Villages scheduled for demolition in central districts  
 Image distributed by KuaiBao.  
<http://kuaibao.qq.com/s/20180927A0FIHU00?refer=spider>

<sup>26</sup> XinHua Net, "Guangzhou's 'most prosperous' urban village reconstruction shady: high officials colluded with developers," Last Modified on August 17, 2014. [https://gz.news.fang.com/2014-08-17/13547246\\_all.htm](https://gz.news.fang.com/2014-08-17/13547246_all.htm)

<sup>27</sup> Bailey Hu, "Urban Villages Under Attack Razing Migrants' Last Refuge", That's Magazine, May 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Guangzhou Real-estate News, "1/3 of the new construction will use 'old land' 64 projects to come, the property price starts from 20,000 yuan per square meter," KuaiBao, <http://kuaibao.qq.com/s/20180927A0FIHU00?refer=spider>

Holiday Celebration Gatherings Demolished Areas Turned Public Spaces



Figure 3.10. XianCun during Chinese New Year  
Original Photograph distributed by HRCChina.  
[https://www.blogger.com/blogin.g?blogspotURL=http://www.hrcchina.org/2015/01/blog-post\\_2.html](https://www.blogger.com/blogin.g?blogspotURL=http://www.hrcchina.org/2015/01/blog-post_2.html)

Outdoor Cooking Areas



Figure 3.11. XianCun  
Original Photograph by ZhangYi Photography  
Distributed by HuaWen Net.  
<https://www.cnread.news/content/1171620.html>

Outdoor Barber Shops



Figure 3.12. XianCun  
Original Photograph by ZhangYi Photography  
Distributed by HuaWen Net.  
<https://www.cnread.news/content/1171620.html>

Demolished Areas Turned Public Spaces



Figure 3.13. XianCun  
Original Photograph distributed by WangYi.  
<http://money.163.com/photoview/0BGT0025/29189.html>

Living Spaces



Figure 3.14. XianCun  
Original Photograph by ZhangYi Photography  
Distributed by HuaWen Net.  
<https://www.cnread.news/content/1171620.html>

Morning Markets



Figure 3.15. XianCun  
Original Photograph by ZhangYi Photography  
Distributed by HuaWen Net.  
<https://www.cnread.news/content/1171620.html>

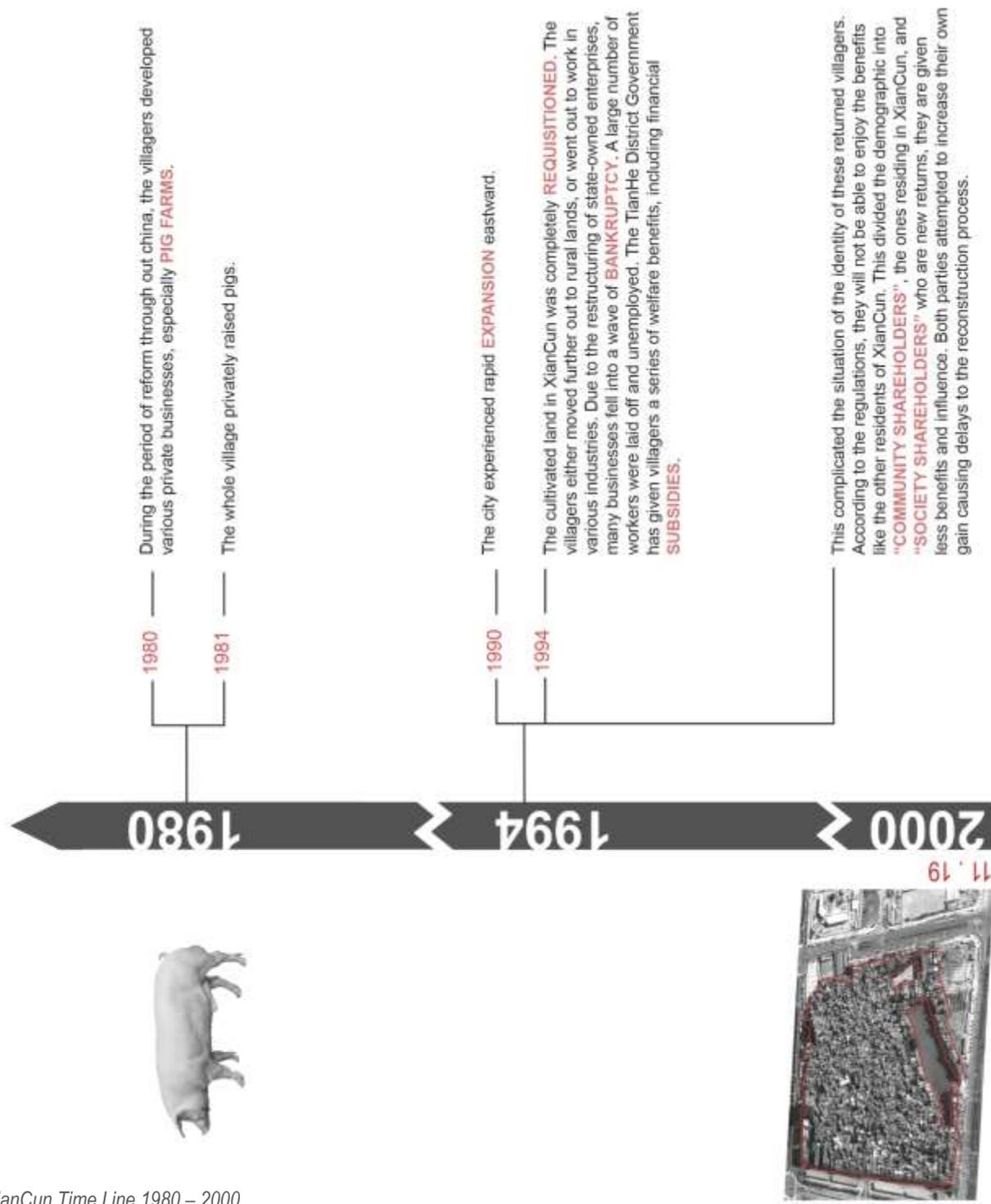


Figure 3.16. XianCun Time Line 1980 – 2000  
 WangYi, "GuangZhou CBD Urban Village Re-Development," Last Modified March 25, 2015,  
<http://gz.house.163.com/15/0325/17/ALIO26PC00873L40.html>.

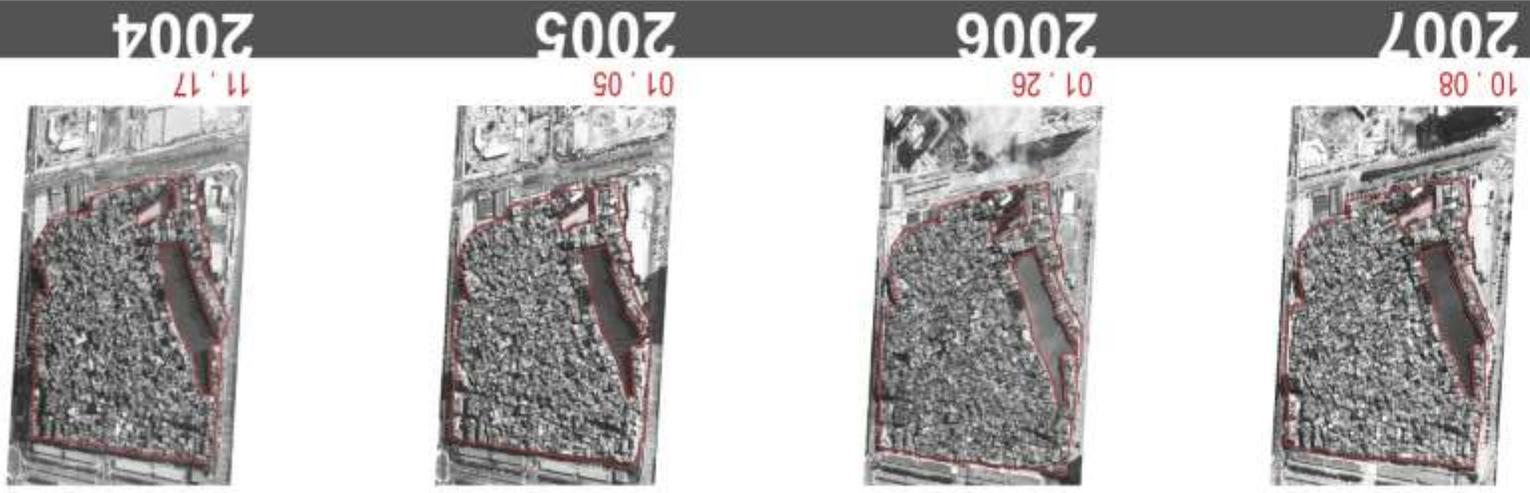


Figure 3.17. XianCun Time Line 2004– 2007  
 WangYi, "GuangZhou CBD Urban Village Re-Development,"



Chinese Symbol painted on houses due for demolition.

2009.07.10

The overall **RE-DEVELOPMENT** work of the village has officially launched. It is planned to complete in three and a half years.

2010.02

The village held a shareholder congress and voted on the compensation and resettlement plan for the overall reconstruction and demolition of XianCun.

Surroundings have been transformed into Skyscrapers / High-rises



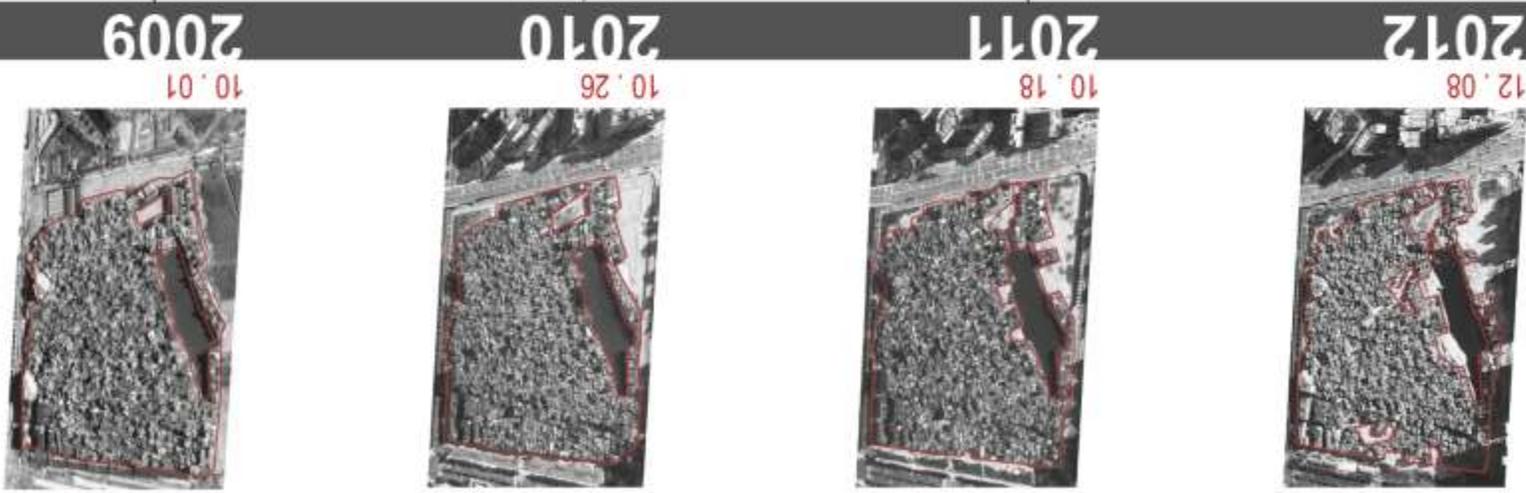


Figure 3.18. XianCun Time Line 2009– 2012  
 BoXun. "Demolition of Tianhe Urban Village XianCun, Villagers Demonstration," Last Modified August 13, 2010, <https://www.boxun.com/news/gb/china/2010/08/201008130853.shtml>.  
 Epoch Times, "The village of Tianhe District, Guangzhou City was demolished," Last Modified on April 15, 2011, <http://www.epochtimes.com/gb/11/4/15/n3228776.htm>

2010.08.13

At night, nearly **1,000 VILLAGERS PROTESTED** against reconstruction. Police intervened and added to the chaos. There were rumors of **POLICE BRUTALITY**.



2010.08.14

The next morning houses were **FORCEFULLY DEMOLISHED**.



2011.04

A small number of unsigned villagers and the demolition team were involved in **VIOLENT ALTERCATIONS** attempting to stop demolition.

The State Council Correctional Office intervened and the demolition work was **SUSPENDED**. From the date of the shutdown to the end of November, no one signed a new contract.

Sign-ages saying "Stop demolition of Xian Cun"

Resident left bloody with head injury



The first phase of the relocation has started. Soon, due to physical **CONFLICTS** between some villagers and the security guards, a group of around **200 VILLAGERS PROTESTED** on HuangPu Avenue, causing a large negative impact and the **DEMOLITION WORK IS POSTPONED** once again.

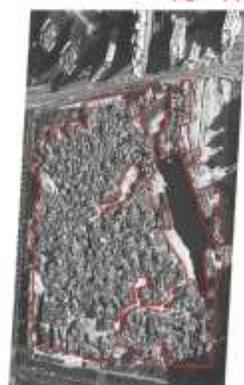
First phase of **RE-DEVELOPMENT STARTED** again.



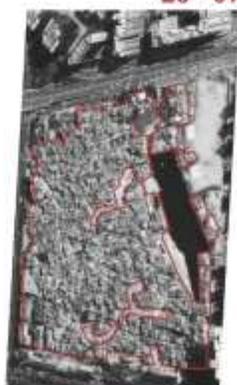
2011.11

2013.05.13

2015.03.12



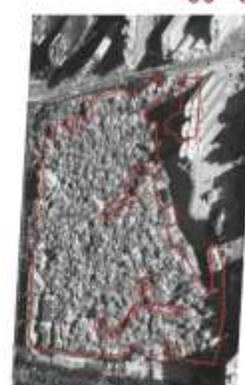
11.21



10.27



12.17



12.08

2013

2014

2015

2016

Figure 3.19. XianCun Time Line 2013 - 2016  
 Epoch Times, "The village of Tianhe District, Guangzhou City was demolished,"  
 Forbidden News. "More than 200 villagers from XianCun wait for Xi Jinping," Last Modified on March 26, 2013,  
<https://www.bannedbook.org/bnews/cbnews/20130326/116062.html>  
 WangYi, "XianCun AB Sides: Some Turn Rich Over-Night, Others can't Find their Way Back Home in Debris," Last modified  
 November 05, 2018, <http://dy.163.com/v2/article/detail/DVRP7KPB05352N18.html>

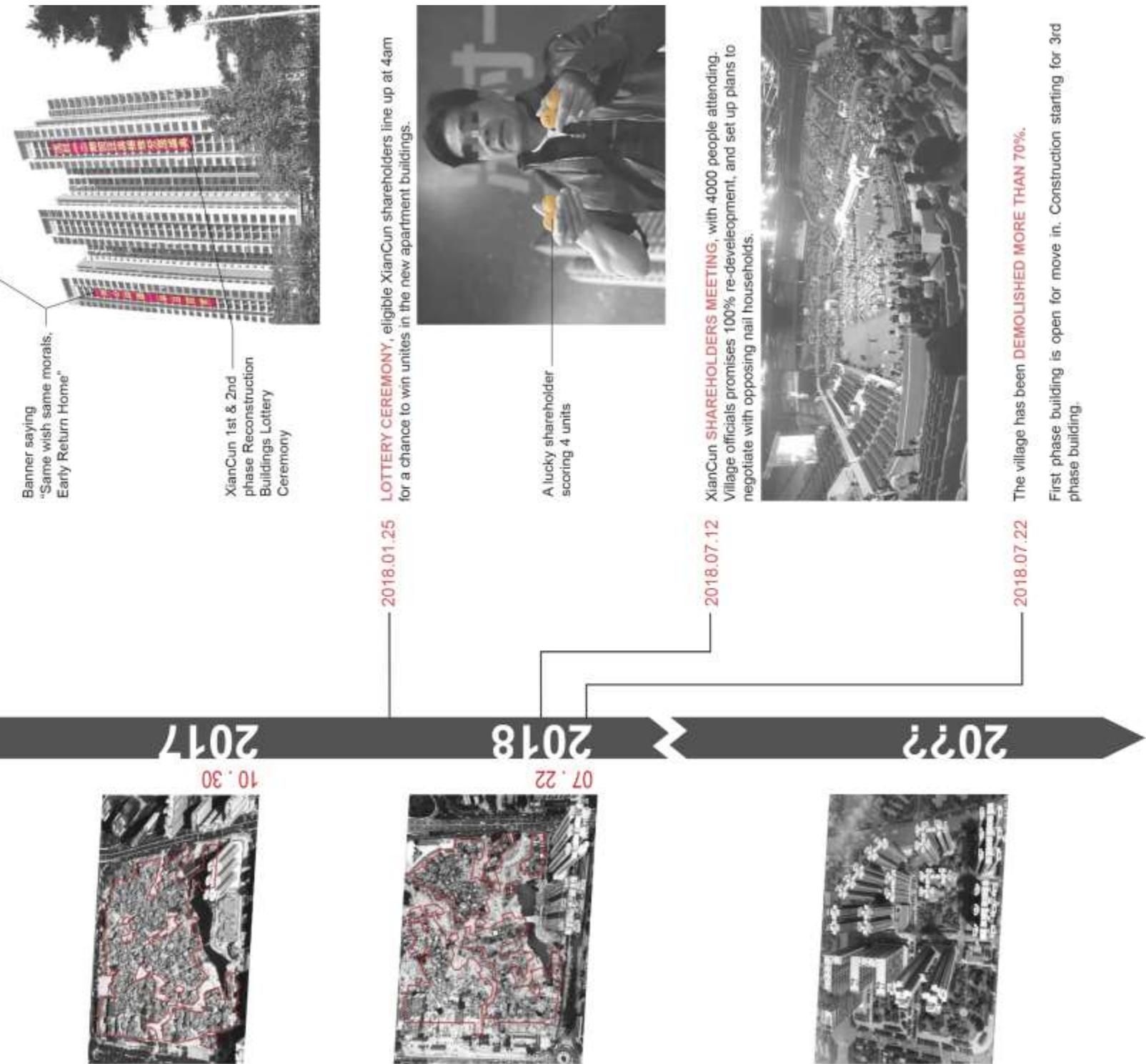


Figure 3.20. XianCun Time Line 2017 Onward

Guangdong YangCheng Evening News, "The first phase redevelopment completed, Nearly 50 villagers 'return home'" Last Modified on February 09, 2018, [http://news.ycwb.com/2018-02/09/content\\_25985404.htm](http://news.ycwb.com/2018-02/09/content_25985404.htm)

Sohu, "Ten Million Rise in Net Worth! The XianCun Villager returned after 9 years! The villagers are moving into 'new homes', the first look into the most expensive re-development project in GuangZhou!", Last Modified January 26, 2018, [http://www.sohu.com/a/219160955\\_380672](http://www.sohu.com/a/219160955_380672).

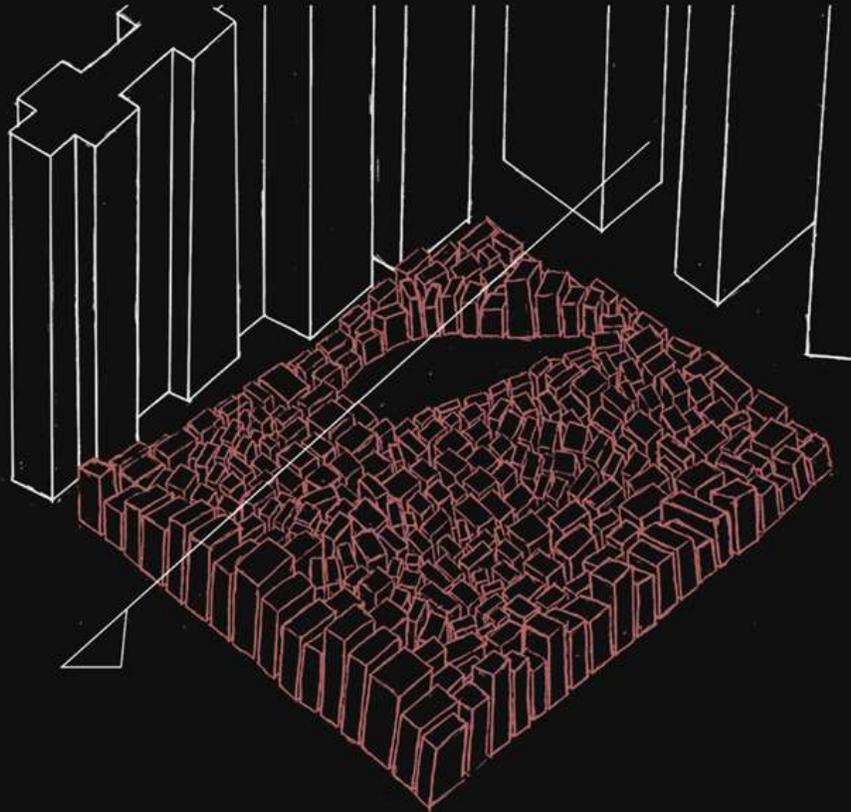
WangYi, "Impressive crowd! The highlight of the XianCun Re-development Shareholder Meeting All You Want to Know!", Last Modified July 16, 2018, <http://bendi.news.163.com/guangdong/18/0125/17/D90TM47804178D6J.html>.

# 4

## SITE SPECIFIC SPECULATIONS

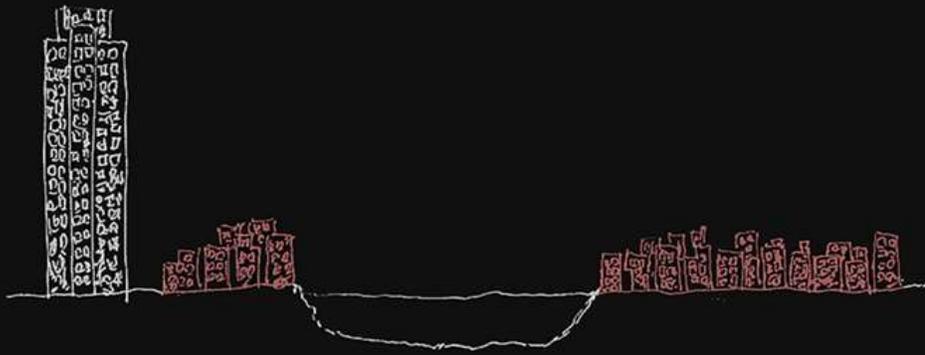
### - Middle Ground -

After analyzing the series of past events in XianCun, it became clear that the gentrification of XianCun is already an inevitability. The first site specific speculation for XianCun is a hypothesis for an alternative method of development to satisfy the expansion of the city, to increase density and the demands for affordable housing for the residents of XianCun. Buildings remaining in XianCun can be tucked beneath future developments. This is an opportunity to create a mixed-use development while preserving the remaining urban villages (Figure 4.2). The addition of a green roof can create a necessary separation between the old and future neighborhoods while providing a public space for the different demographics to interact. Cutout skylights and lighting on the green roof will provide illumination to the streets in XianCun (Figure 4.3). The demolished areas can also be public spaces or developed into commercial spaces and farmer's markets accessible to all.

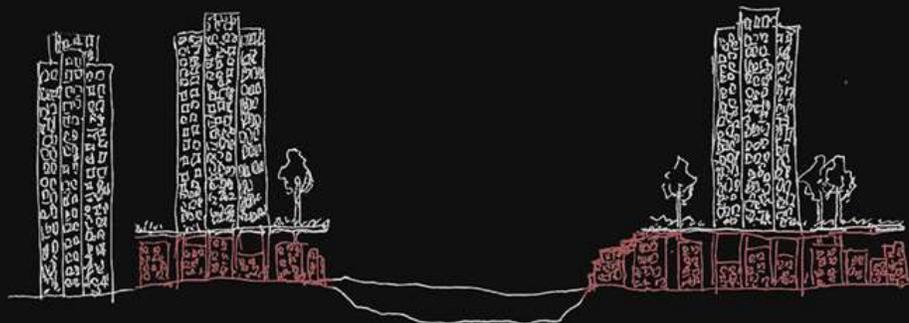


Highrise Buildings within close vicinity to the urban village

Figure 4.1. XianCun Axonometric Drawing



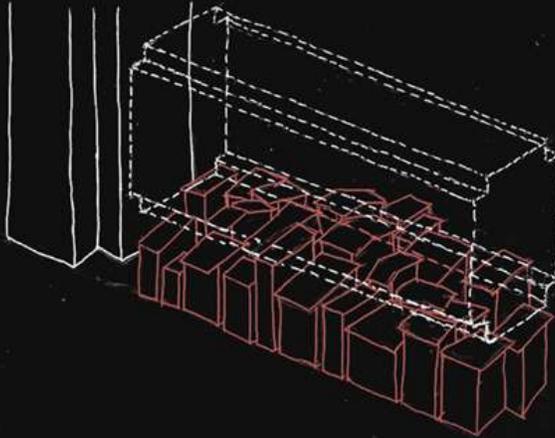
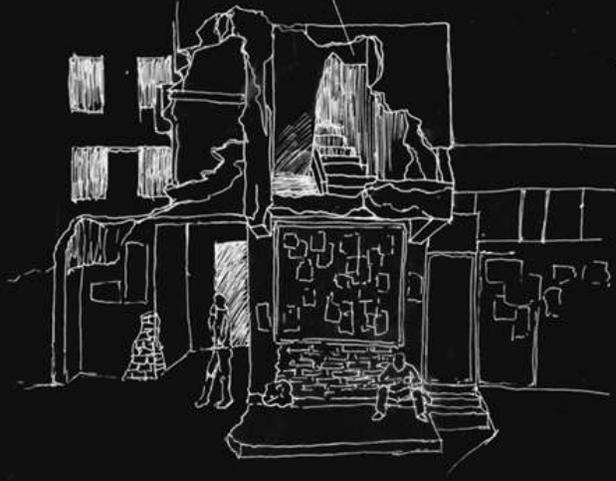
Demolished area occupied as public area



Perserving urban village under the green roof with highrises above

Figure 4.2. XianCun Speculations Elevation

The demolition alters the indoor and outdoor spaces



Promoting the intergration of migrant workers into the rest of the city, by superimposing the highrises onto the existing urban villages

Openings on Green Roof to raise the streets and the spaces between buildings in Urban Vilages



Figure 4.3. XianCun Speculations

### **- Sewing the Gap -**

Furthering the initial speculation, let us now look at is the idea of inhabiting the gap spaces within older residential areas in Guangzhou. Similar type of structure can be constructed in urban villages along the narrow streets. From researching the types of historic architectures that exist in Guangzhou there is a common thread: QiLou and TongZi Lou are all narrow structures (Figures 4.4), there are no spaces between the buildings, the individual units are tight against the next sharing the same load bearing wall, thus, creating a continuous façade along the street (Figure 4.5 and 4.6). A similar architectural language can be continued within the gap spaces. The infill structure can sew together the buildings on either side. A metaphorical example of opportunistic living within the cracks is demonstrated by a Banyan tree in Guangzhou, growing through the wall of a building from the ground to the roof (Figure 4.4).

Another possible is the rooftop. In addition, rooftop billboards located on residential buildings were banned in Guangzhou since April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, opening up more spaces for rooftop dwelling units. There can be a shared structural system between the infill structure and the rooftop units, allowing them to hang instead of interfering with the adjacent load bearing walls of existing buildings. The residential units can be formed by inserting removable containers within the existing structural system. The infill structure can now be off the ground. Further, the residences will have fire escape ladders allowing dwellers to enter and exit the structure. This creates a tunnel for pedestrians to flow through. There can be commercial spaces directly above, therefore the interactions will be vertical. The vendors can display merchandise hanging along the wall of the tunnel or from above.

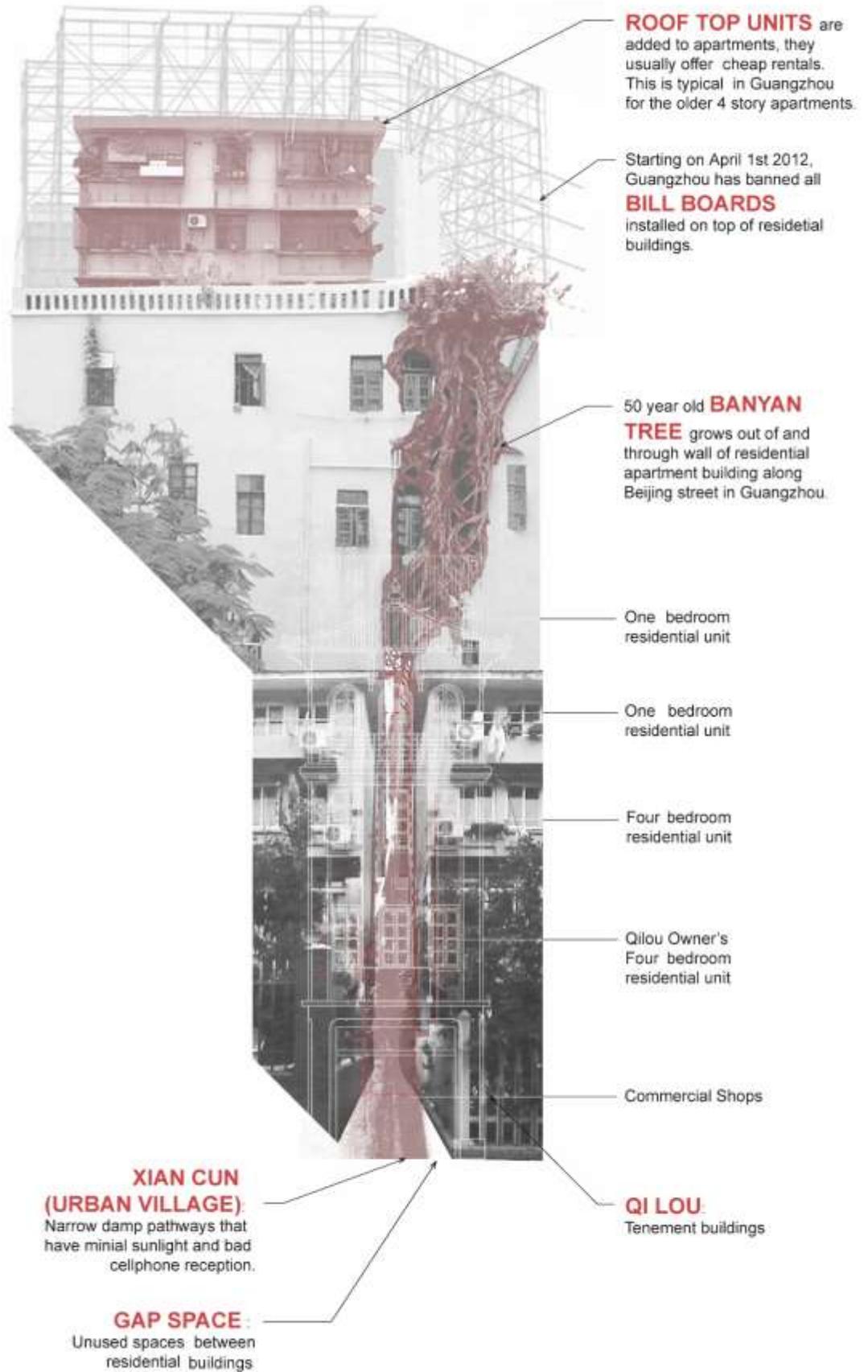


Figure 4.4. GuangZhou: Context Analysis

Sina, "Guangzhou ban billboards on residential roofs will be implemented from April 1 this year," Last Modified on february 16, 2012, <http://news.gd.sina.com.cn/news/20120216/1241154.html>

ChinaQiao Net, "Guangzhou, banyan tree grow out of residential building, fused with the wall for nearly 50 years," Last Modified on August 08, 2018, <http://www.chinaqw.com/qx/hd2011/2018/08-22/24964.shtml>.

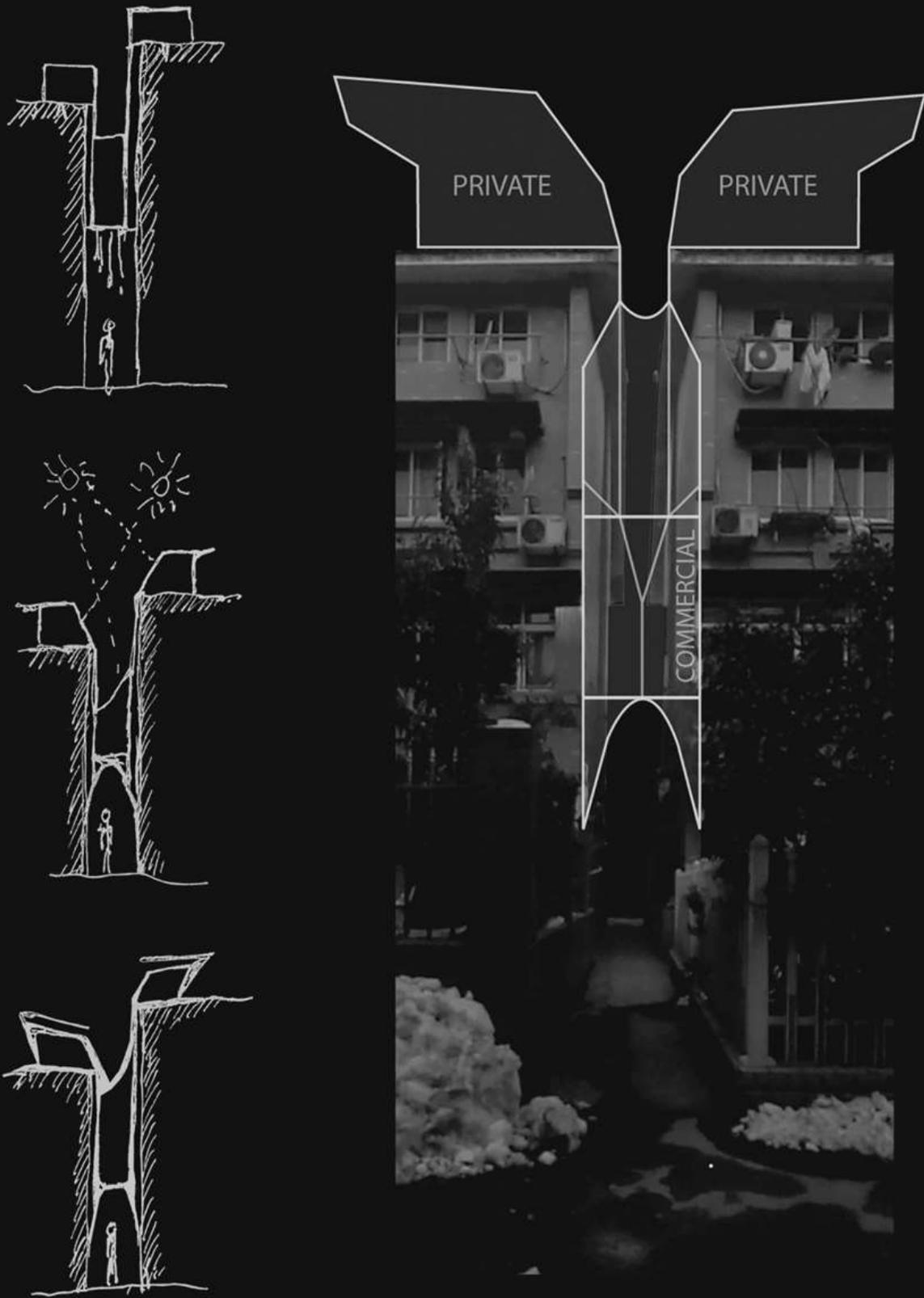


Figure 4.5. "GapSpace" Speculations - Parti

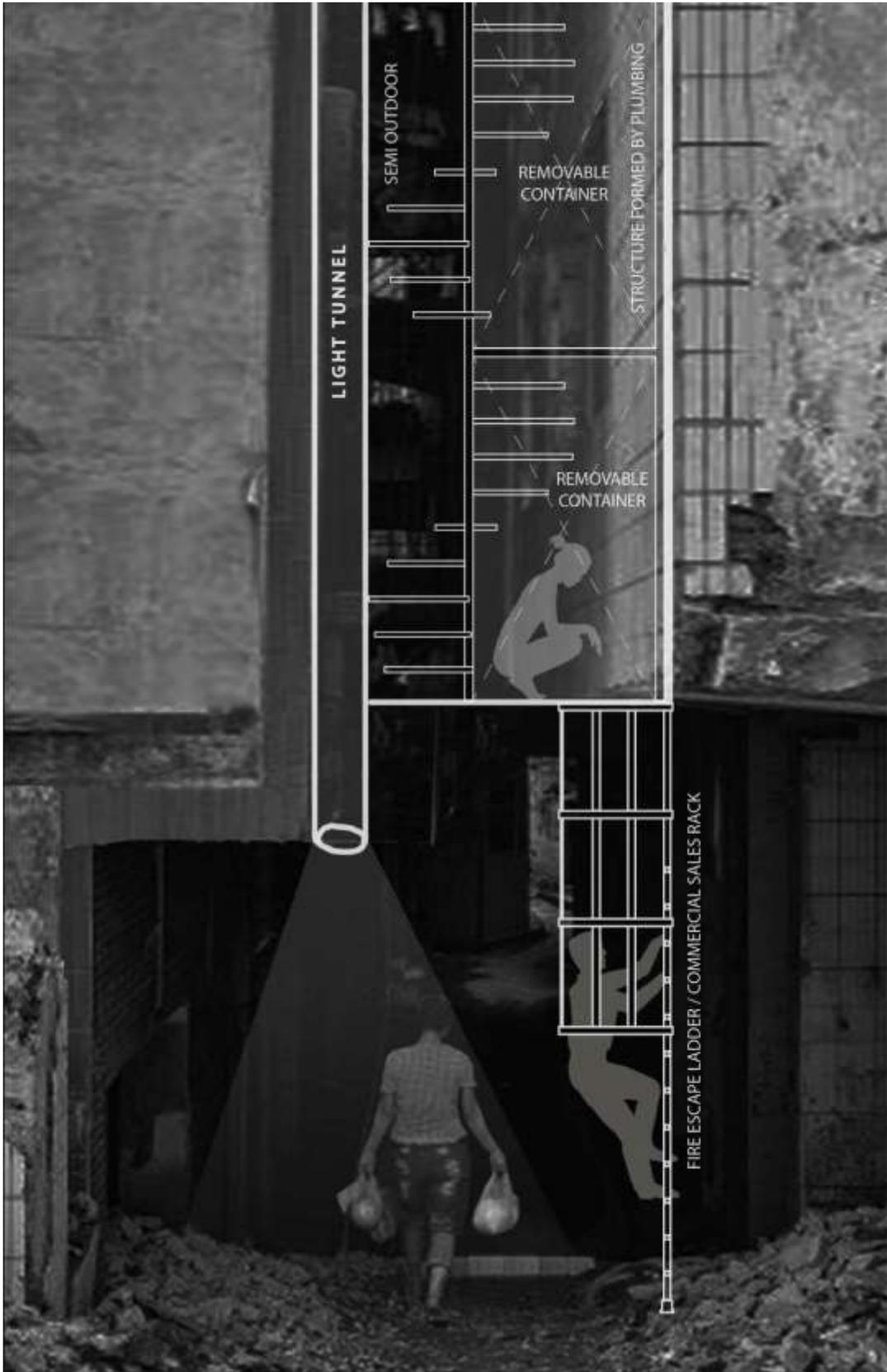


Figure 4.6. "Gap Space" Speculation  
Original photograph distributed by CaiLiang Wang. <http://wangcailiang.blog.caixin.com/archives/69924>

# 5

## URBAN VILLAGE SITE VISITS

### - XianCun - 洗村 -

Various types of structures co-exist on site, with visibly different atmospheres from one area to the next. A mixture of remaining nail houses, half demolished or vacant buildings, the newly constructed apartments, and the temporary prefab building for the construction workers. All the buildings that are demolished are piled into mountains of concrete debris. I discovered that even though the site itself is physically deteriorating, the urban village XianCun itself is not, the daily life of the villagers goes on as they - adept changing circumstances. Some take advantage, making use of found materials to hang cloth, collecting materials possibly metal, which can be sold for money. In certain corners, people are going about as if nothing has changed. Children are running, there were a mother and child caring for the garden, a group of middle-aged men are playing Chinese chess are amongst the many signs of everyday life around the urban village as it faces its inevitable demise.

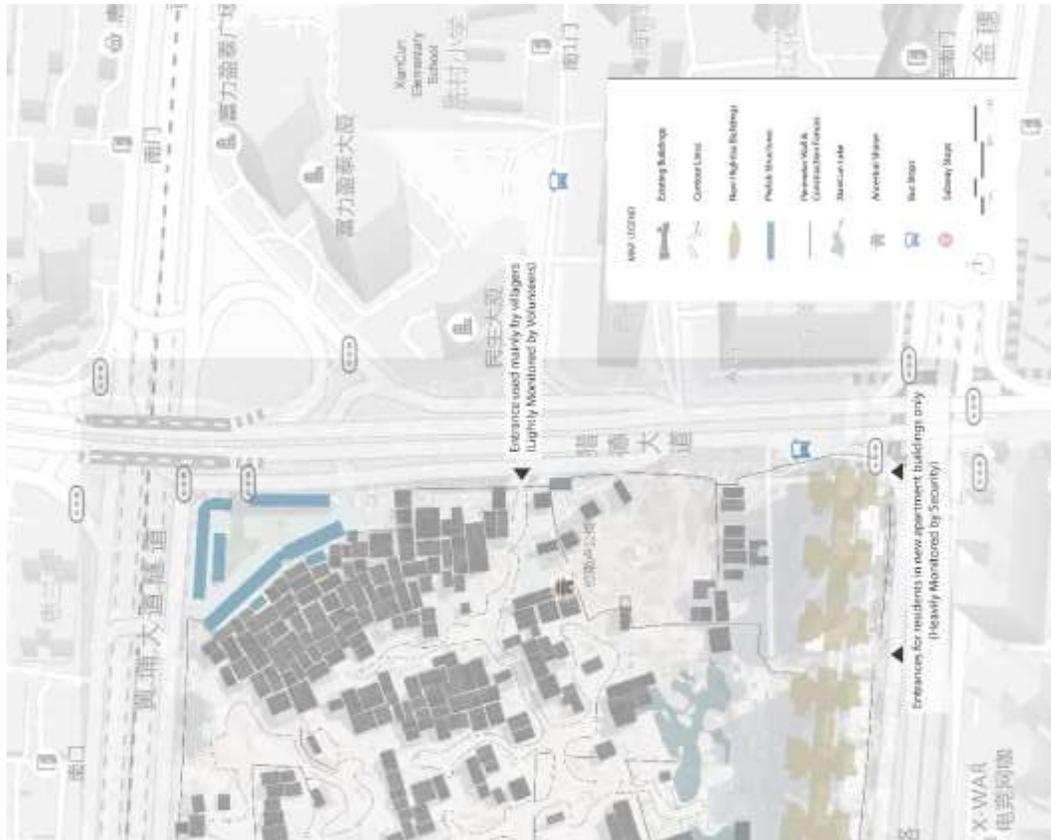


Figure 5.1. XianCun site plan – Aerial View photograph on September 2018, Overlaid with observed and estimated data. Original Photograph distributed by KuaiBao. <http://kuaibao.qq.com/s/20180927A0FIHU00?refer=spider>.



The area is walled off and has propaganda posters along the exterior - all promoting for a better future for Xian Cun. At the entrance, there was a sign saying I must register if I am not a villager. But the volunteers at the office did not bother with procedures and allowed me to enter without restriction. I attempted to speak to certain villagers regarding their current condition, but many were weary. They asked if I was a journalist, and they kindly refused. There are also guards in certain areas that questioned my purpose for visiting.

I was able to interview a group of migrant workers from HeNan, Mr.Liu spoke on behave of them (Figure 5.2). They are currently renting from one of the villagers that is amongst the shareholders refusing to sign the agreement for redevelopment. They worked at a factory in GuangZhou and have been living in XianCun for many years since they left HeNan.They stated that there are many government employees that would visit the site, and most residents are afraid to cause problems.

Migrant Work Mr. Liu from HeNan renting in Xian Cun that I had the pleasure to speak with



Figure 5.2. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.15.2018

The village shareholders that have money all live elsewhere and signed the agreement. The shareholders that still live there are not agreeing to the redevelopment because they are not getting reasonable compensation and many tenants are in support of this decision. It is rumored that a single government official can get a hundred million yuan each from redevelopment projects.

These workers also revealed that before the new president JinPing Xi many demolitions happened because the people were beaten until they agreed to give up on their home. Now, the policy has changed so they cannot be forceful like before. This is the reason for the long delay. They are all faced with the problem of finding a future home because it is hard to find another area cheaper than XianCun, and they cannot afford the rent in other urban villages. They might have no other choice but to leave GuangZhou

Nail Household - people who refuse to relocate

The demolished materials will be crushed to pave roads



Figure 5.3. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.15.2018

There remains a significant number of people living in XianCun



Figure 5.4. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.15.2018

Prefab shelters for construction workers in Xian Cun



Figure 5.5. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

The nail households next to the newly constructed apartment buildings



Figure 5.6. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

Clothes drying rack  
made from bamboo  
sticks



Figure 5.7. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

Shoring wall to clear  
areas by retaining  
demolished material



Figure 5.8. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

Scaffolding providing  
protection to the  
path below



Figure 5.9. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

Residents have gardens within the demolished debris



Figure 5.10. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

Children playing with bamboo sticks



Fruit and vegetable vendors are seen around the site



Figure 5.11. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

Many residents are scavenging for scrap metal, possibly for sale after



The existing buildings and the narrow walkways in remaining urban village

Figure 5.12. XianCun Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018

## - LieDe - 猎德 -

The residential project for LieDe in 2007 is the most well-known example of urban village redevelopment cases. LieDe used to be the poorest area of TienHe district, with the cheapest rent. Now, it is known as one of the most profitable projects, and the parties involved have gained a sizable fortune. It is reported that many residents have become millionaires overnight.<sup>29</sup> It is also a running meme in popular culture - when people say they are from the village, it is revealed to be LieDe village, which implies that they are affluent. This has shaped a negative public perception of nail houses in urban villages, such as XianCun.

Currently, the apartment high-rises in LieDe has been deemed a failure. It has created numerous problems caused by the size and density of the buildings. The building type is called PingFengLuo, meaning folded screen buildings, due to the rectangular shape of the building and modular layout. This is problematic because it prohibits proper air circulation and blocks sunlight for surrounding areas.

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<sup>29</sup> Guangzhou Daily, "Guangzhou LieDe Village "Miracle": the annual rent earning of more than 500,000 Yuan," ChinaNews, Last Modified on December 25, 2014, <http://www.chinanews.com/cj/2014/12-25/6910395.shtml>.

High-rise Apartment  
Buildings



*Figure 5.13. LieDe Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018*

Stone signage  
constructed in the place  
of the old signage



*Figure 5.14. LieDe Site Visit Photo 12.14.2018*

**- ShiPai - 石牌 -**

This is one of the oldest urban villages in GuangZhou - located directly north of XianCun. The residents of XianCun will possibly evacuate and relocate to ShiPai. Unfortunately, for many, they are not able to afford the rent. All the buildings are much higher in ShiPai. The major alleyways have ground level commercial shops and restaurants, is approximately three and a half meters wide. There are many little dark and damp alleyways as narrow as two meters, but some have artificial lighting or are illuminated by neon shop signs. The spaces between buildings can be very minimal at around half a meter. There is constant traffic with scooters and trolleys passing. The dense bundles of electrical cables run against the building exteriors. I did receive some questioning stares and looks likely due to my camera and for being an obvious outsider. Regardless, I did not feel worried for my safety. The living environment is not the best in quality, but the atmosphere is relatively lively (Figure 5.15).

Buildings are all mostly higher than the allowed 5 stories

Most commercial shops in the first levels have neon sign



Figure 5.15. ShiPai Site Visit Photo 12.20.2018

### - TangXia- 棠下 -

TangXia is further east of TianHe, on the periphery of the newly developed city center. It is one of the urban villages that is planned to be purchased by the government and has been scheduled for redevelopment since 2017. There are some posters on the information billboard showing villagers in opposition to the potential redevelopment of the urban village. The general layout is the same as ShiPai with the commercial shop running along major alleyways. The one interesting aspect that made TangXia different is that a large portion of the ground is tiled. All the smaller alleyways are in the process of having exterior ground tiling installed (Figure 5.16). Most, if not all, residential building clusters have heavy duty security doors enclosing an area not accessible to the public, presumably as safety mechanisms. The area in general is well planned and the commercial shops along the edges facing towards the main streets potentially could serve customers coming from outside the village.

Workers are paving  
tiles in TangXia Cun



Figure 5.16. TangXia Site Visit Photo 12.20.2018

# 6

## GAP SPACE SITE VISIT

There was no method to track down gap spaces in GuangZhou, the following locations described in the section is encountered by chance. It was clear the general area to explore was the older parts of the city, LiWan and YueXiu district.

My friend, Xue He, who grew up in GuangZhou and lived in the city for 16 years. She guided me through the various tourist destinations and places of interest from her experiences as a local. One of the places were these commercial streets that used to be popular shopping areas amongst students in search of unique styles. The price was cheaper, and they sold merchandise in bulk for boutique owners. Disappointingly, these commercial streets have become seemingly obsolete, with only a few shops open, and minimal foot traffic. Branching off from streets – ZhuangYuanFang and GaoDiJie are various 'gap spaces hidden in the shadow.

Another area I encountered from exploring the city on foot is the older communities – YuDaiHao, ZhanTangLu and QingLongLi Community. Unlike the newly constructed residential areas, there has minimal security dividing the residential buildings and the public roads. There are ‘gap spaces’ leading into the residential area, and between the buildings.

It is visibly more modernized in the eastern parts of YueXiu district. The roads and highways are elevated on concrete structures, separating vehicles from the pedestrian sidewalk. There are fewer ‘gap spaces’, but there was one along DongChuan Lu. The residents in the buildings have utilized the structure to house plants, and there were people walking across the elevated platform. Unintentionally these areas with ‘gap space’ I encounter are along the Pearl River, meandering from west to east across GuangZhou. All potential spaces to construct the ‘gap city’.



- ZhuangYuanFang - 状元坊 -

Commercial streets that used to be a popular shopping area for students or buying in bulk, now becoming obsolete.



Figure 6.2. Gap Space near ZhuangYuanFang Site Visit Photo 12.23.2018

- YuDaiHao - 玉带濠 -

A residential street used to be an ancient river, now a street connecting older residential buildings.



Figure 6.3. Gap Space near YuDaiHao Site Visit Photo 12.23.2018

- GaoDi Jie - 高第街 -

Commercial streets that use to be a popular shopping area for buying lingerie and swimsuits in bulk, now becoming obsolete.



Figure 6.4. Gap Space near GaoDiJie Site Visit Photo 12.23.2018

- ZhanTangLu Community - 湛塘路大院 -

Residential area with aged buildings.



Figure 6.5. Gap Space near ZhanTangLu Community Site Visit Photo 12.24.2018

- QingLongLi Community - 青龙里小区 -

Residential area with aged buildings.



Figure 6.6. Gap Space near QingLongLi Community Site Visit Photo

- DongChuan Lu - 东川路 -

Highway elevated on concrete structures. The pedestrian walkways are lined with low-rise and mixed-use buildings.



Figure 6.7. Gap Space near DongChuanLu Site Visit Photo 12.22.2018

# 7

## EXTENSIVE SPECULATIONS

### - Rube Goldberg Machine -

The unique areas of a city can be shaped by a series of events, a chain reaction that is characteristic to the location, demographics and time period. The events surrounding XianCun reflect some of the issues that are specific to major Chinese cities such as Guangzhou. The complicated circumstances in Guangzhou made the simple need for shelter by the migrant workers a complex course leading to design speculations need to be shaped by the current situations and human interactions. The design strategies will be a quick response, a temporary relief, rather than a definitive solution.

The first of the suggested initiatives is anchored by the internal events of the and remaining community still dwelling on site. It will be a closed circuit. There will be minimal influences and assistance from external parties. The structures, shelters, and installation will be realized by the inhabitant and constructed with materials found on site. It is important to not commit the same actions as the condo developers, offering inhabitants superficial assistance for publicity, while destroying their place of belonging, and emphasizing the public image of them being second-class citizens. The aim is to let them voice their own perspectives on the matter and minimize the number of outsiders trying to make interventions.

## - Resistance and the Inevitable -

As Lebbeus Woods writes:

*“These architects must take the initiative, beginning from a point of origin that precedes anything to be resisted, one deep within an idea of architecture itself. They can never think of themselves as resisters, or join resistance movements, or preach resistance. Rather (and this is the hard part of resistance) they must create an independent idea of both architecture and the world.”*<sup>30</sup>

*“The idea of resistance, whether political, cultural, or architectural, can only exist where there is an established order. The aim of resistance is seldom to overturn this order, but to provide a place, so to speak, where all who are dissatisfied with it can operate more freely, relieved of a necessity to conform.”*<sup>31</sup>

The existence of urban villages is in a way already resistance to the wave of gentrification as the city expands. A protest by the working class against the utopian dream of the rich and powerful. The nail houses are fighting the developers and the government officials buy people out for cheap while pocketing the profit. These speculations are creative ways to aid the resisters' daily lives by discovering spaces of interaction within the aftermath of demolition. This is “minority architecture”, an opportunity for the specific community to leave their mark in a specific urban village, XianCun, that is inevitably going to disappear.

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<sup>30</sup> Lebbeus Wood, “Thoughts on Architecture of Resistance,” Accessed March 26, <http://www.lebbeuswoods.net/LW-ResistanceText2.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

*“There can be no permanent architecture of resistance. Architecture of resistance is hit-and-run architecture. It is guerrilla architecture. Its goals are short-term, immediate. Its ambition is to become manifest, then fade away. When it is gone, the trace it leaves becomes part of the landscape.”*<sup>32</sup>

*“it seeks to be effective in the present, for the sake of those who find themselves without a place to be themselves.”*<sup>33</sup>

The structures described in the speculation will all be temporary. It will trace the façade of the buildings to capture and retain the narrow ‘gaps’ and walkways characteristic of urban villages. The demolitions in XianCun has created an organic landscape, juxtaposing the surrounding urban fabric. It can be interrupted as a manmade form, similar to those used in the control of natural disasters, such as earthquakes or avalanches. They will become shelters that retain an inhabitable space within the rubble and create entirely different accessible spaces. There is also the possibility where the frame is completely submerged, forming a ghost of the narrow walkways. This is a chance for “architecture to be defensive and reactionary”.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

My speculation is all based around the people remaining in XianCun. New minority structures can promote their day to day lives, at the same time provide protection, a temporary shield raised over what is remaining of their disappearing home or spaces. They exist in remains. These human interactions are forms of resistance. they will be constructed with materials found on site built, occupied by people on site, and eventually demolished by workers on the site. It is a small gathering of remnants, a contained communal affair. Structures and spaces within it will evolve as the site crumbles down. Once it is demolished and uninhabitable, certain pieces will stay and be buried with the remains of demolished buildings, buried under the brand-new apartments. Certain pieces will leave with the villagers and relocate into gap spaces around the city.

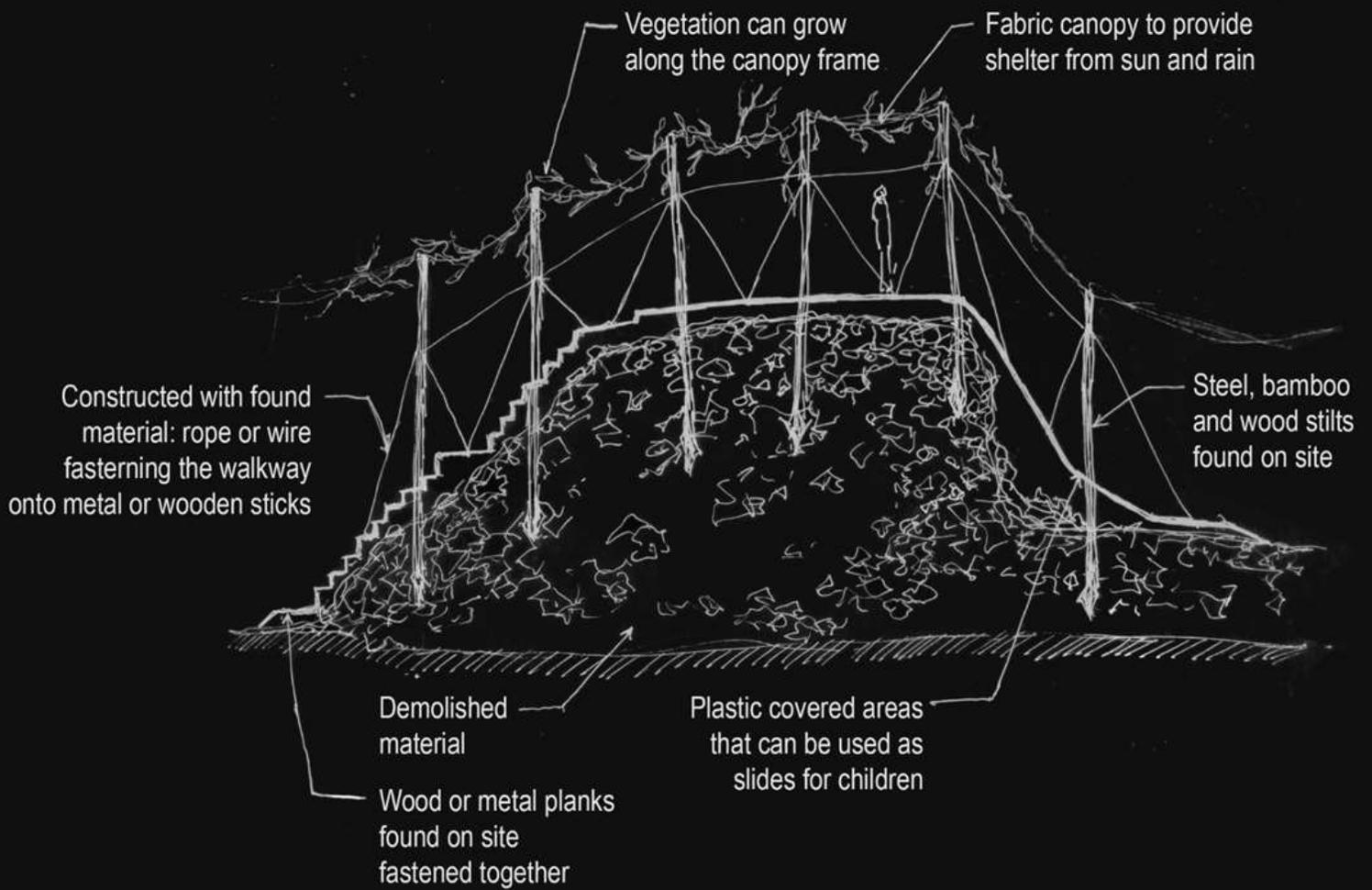


Figure 7.1. Walkway on Demolished Material Speculation

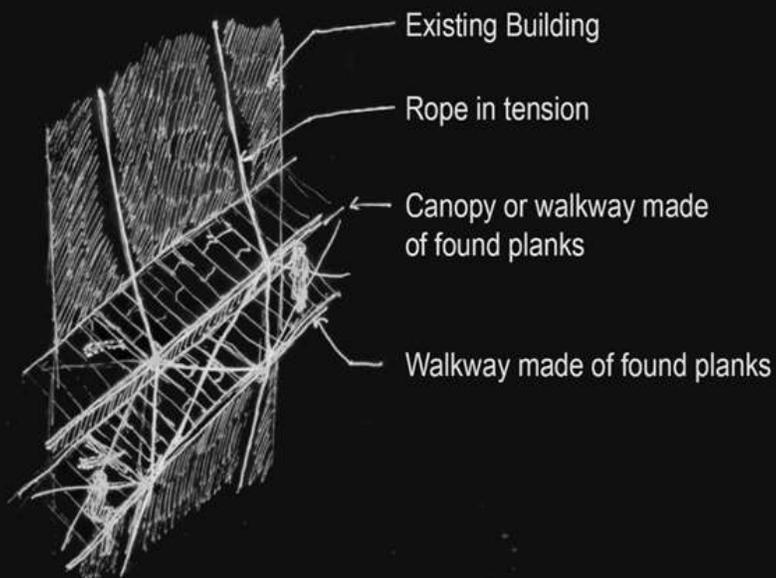
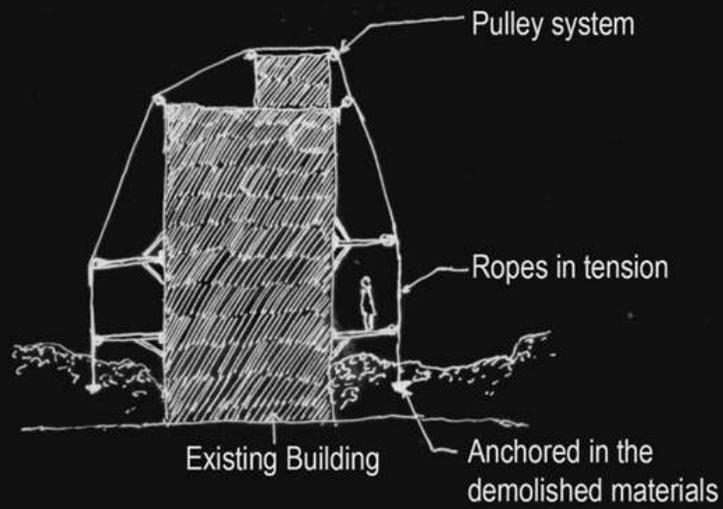
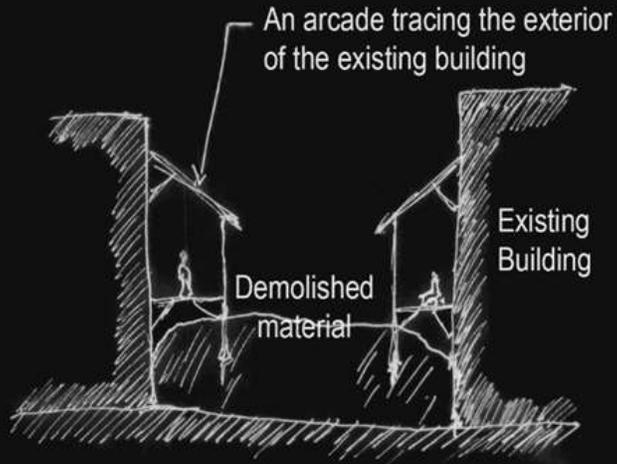


Figure 7.2. Walkway on Existing Building Speculation



Figure 7.3. Speculation Drawing on Site Visit Photo



Figure 7.4. speculation Drawing on Site Visit Photo

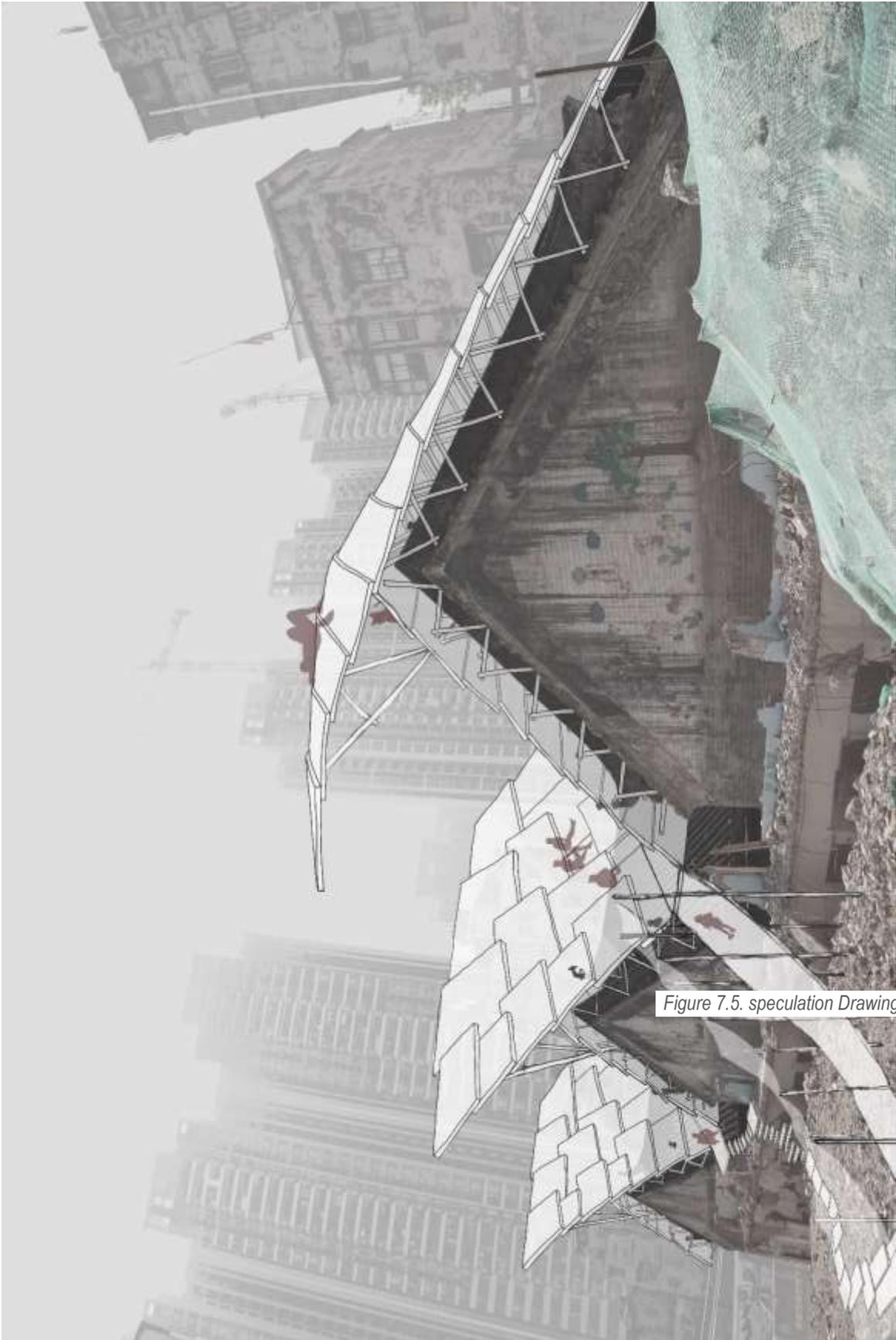
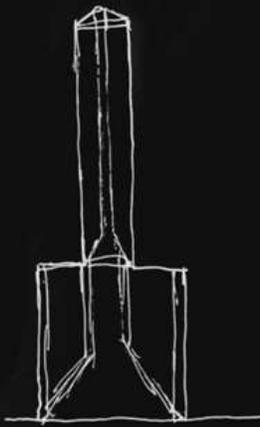


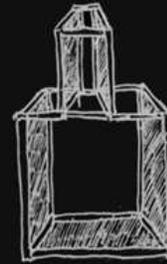
Figure 7.5. speculation Drawing on Site Visit Photo – Ar



Figure 7.6. speculation Drawing on Site Visit Photo



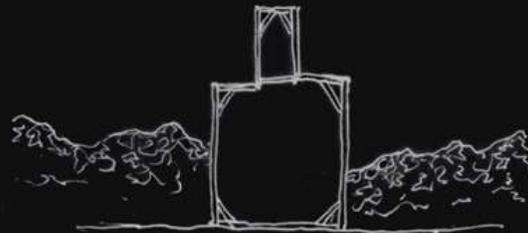
the narrow walkways  
characteristic to Urban Villages



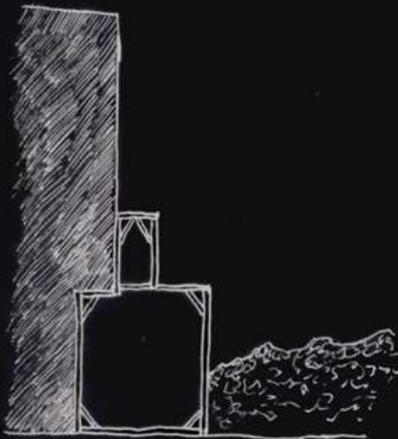
Metal frames with wire mesh to retain  
against the rubble.



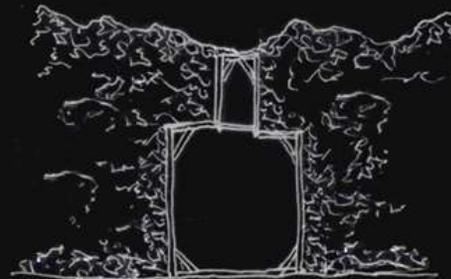
Frames built with found material  
on site, trace the facade of  
existing buildings



The spaces within the frame will transform  
as the surrounding buildings are gradually  
reduced to rubble



The frame will perseve hollow  
outline of the walkways.



At locations where the frame is buried  
completely by the debris, the quality imitates  
that of the walkways that are now gone



Figure 7.8. Speculation Drawing on Site Visit Photo 12.20.2018

## **- Relocate into Gap Spaces –**

The speculations undertaken are a series of reactionary tales. Each a different perspective directed by a new layer of information. After research and analysis, we must accept that the destruction of urban villages is inevitable. This then is a temporary existence for people who are in transition, a minority architecture. Migrant worker is short term identity, they were rural villagers and they will return to rural farmlands or integrate into urban society, similarly nobody is living in urban villages long term.

Continuing the ideas suggested in Sewing the Gap: The people that are evacuated out of XianCun, along with the structures that are removed from the site can settle into the “gap space” between residential buildings. This is an opportunity to form a horizontal system across Guangzhou, all the structures in “gap space” thread together to form a “gap city”. They can be hidden within the existing urban fabric while allowing the structures to blend in with the residential areas. Similar to the fate of urban villages, these old residential buildings will be gentrified into high-rise apartment buildings. This resistance will exist where it is needed and allowed, meandering through the city. Forming An ever-changing vibrant thread sewing together the gaps in the city, when it has finished serving its purpose, it will also disappear.



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